

2016

# The Use of Minors in Material Support of Terrorist Organizations

Teresa Maria Feliciano  
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# Walden University

College of Social and Behavioral Sciences

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Teresa Maria Feliciano

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Walden University  
2016

Abstract

The Use of Minors in Material Support of Terrorist Organizations

by

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MBA, Tarelton State University, 1999

BBA, Augusta College, 1990

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Public Policy and Administration

Walden University

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## Abstract

Adult criminals' use of minors to commit crimes associated with the support of terrorist organizations is a significant problem in the United States. Despite strict laws prohibiting adult offenders from exploiting youth, these individuals aggressively pursue minors to commit crimes associated with the support of terrorist organizations. This quasi-experimental, cross-sectional study used resource dependency theory to explore the likelihood that adult criminal offenders in the U.S. will use minors for crimes that are associated with the support of terrorist organizations, based on crime typology, country of origin, and location of crime. Data were collected from a crime database maintained by the United States Sentencing Commission for 2012. Logistic regression was conducted to assess if crime typology, country of origin, and location of crime predicted the use of minors for crime by adult offenders in support of terrorist organizations. Results of the analysis were significant:  $\chi^2(7, N=485) = 180.18, p < .001$ , suggesting that crime typology, country of origin, and location of crime were significant predictors of the use of minors in crimes that are associated with the support of terrorist organizations. Drug trafficking and robbery crimes, and crimes committed in the Southern regions of the U.S. were most likely to involve minors when compared to other types of crimes and regions of the U.S., respectively. Positive social change implications stemming from this study include a recommendation to Congress to increase federal funding for law enforcement agencies and social programs, thereby improving the lives of minors that otherwise may become victims of adult criminal offenders who seek to use them to commit crimes in support of terrorist organizations.

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## Dedication

Many family members and friends have supported me through the dissertation journey and I am immensely grateful to each of them. However, three of my strongest supporters have shared the sacrifices with me along the way. This dedication is for them.

I first dedicate this dissertation to my husband, David, who encouraged me to take on this incredibly challenging endeavor. He understood from the beginning what it would entail, yet selflessly made the decision to put my needs before his own. Without his love, support, and understanding, I could not have accomplished this.

I also dedicate this dissertation to my son, David, for his patience and understanding. He never complained despite having to sacrifice so much time without me as I pursued this goal over the past few years. I will forever be grateful to him and I love him with all my heart.

I also dedicate this dissertation to Sophia, for being an amazing daughter and friend. She has served as my sounding board, cheerleader, and source of strength. I have been blessed with her and because of her, I never gave up.

My final dedication is in memory to my mother, Edith. Not a day passes that I do not think of her and how much I love her. Through her memory, I gain strength.

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## Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

### **Introduction**

A significant problem exists in the United States regarding adult criminals using minors to commit crimes associated with the support of terrorist organizations. Despite strict laws prohibiting criminal adult offenders from exploiting youth, these individuals aggressively pursue minors as young as 6th graders to commit crimes associated with the support of terrorist organizations (Killebrew & Bernal, 2010). This quantitative study increased the understanding of this problem through investigation of the likelihood of criminal offenders in the United States using minors to commit crimes associated with the support of foreign terrorist organizations.

Several researchers have identified the exploitation of minors to commit terrorist-related crimes, presenting a problem that warranted examination (Choo, 2013; Farrell & Fahy, 2009; Gonzalez, 2013). For example, a 2014 investigation revealed that individuals with known ties to terrorist organizations used minors along the U.S. border to traffic drugs (CBS, n.d.). Other examples include the use of minors by adult criminal offenders in the United States to carry out money laundering transactions to fund terrorist organizations (Choo, 2013), and the exploitation of teens for prostitution to provide funds to terrorist organizations (Farrell & Fahy, 2009; Gonzalez, 2013).

Although studies have indicated that the exploitation of minors in the commission of terrorist crimes is a problem, the full extent of the problem has not been clear (Choo, 2013; Gonzalez, 2013). Shelley (2009) recognized the participation of minors in crimes

associated with the support of terrorism as not having been extensively analyzed in academia. Shelley specifically recognized a lack of scholarly literature on the use of minors to commit crimes in support of foreign terrorist organizations by adult criminal offenders in the United States. The current study involved addressing this gap in the literature.

The primary research question for this dissertation study was, What is the likelihood that adult criminal offenders in the United States will use minors for crimes associated with the support of terrorist organizations, based on crime typology, country of origin, and location of crime? In the context of this study, *use of a minor* referred to the use a person 18 years old or younger in the commission of a crime by adult criminal offenders in the United States, which served as the dependent variable. The study's three independent variables were crime typology, location of crime, and country of origin.

Because of ethical considerations of data collection on this topic, I conducted a logistic regression test of archival data, rather than collecting new primary source data. The secondary data used in this study were obtained from a public criminal justice database of U.S. criminal cases to measure the likelihood that a minor would be used in a crime associated with the support of a foreign terrorist organization. The variables tracked were:

- crime typology, which described the type of crime for which the adult criminal offender was sentenced;



- location of crime, which described the state in which the crime was committed; and
- country of origin, which described the country where the adult sentenced for the crime was born.

The use of minors to commit crimes associated with the support of terrorist organizations is a significant problem that threatens minors, communities, and public safety. The negative influence of seasoned criminal offenders on minors has ramifications throughout communities, fueling the proliferation of violence, drug crimes, community robberies, car thefts, murders, and prostitution (Shelley, 2009). Adult offenders who provide support to foreign terrorist organizations may place minors at grave risk when they use minors in the commission of crimes. Minors who become involved in such crimes face potential long-term punishments that they may not initially anticipate or understand (Shelley, 2009). While minors may experience lighter punishments than adult criminal offenders in some cases, judges and prosecutors in every state may also exercise a legal provision that allows them to transfer minor criminal cases to adult courts (Cooper & Urban, 2012). This provision increases the likelihood that minors will be tried for serious crimes as adults.

A minor's ignorance that he or she has committed a crime in support of a foreign terrorist organization does not provide a strong defense in court. Once an individual is found guilty of a crime, it is up to the court to decide if the crime was in support of a foreign terrorist organization (Doyle, 2010). Statutes only dictate that a person must have

reasonably known his or her actions were in support of a foreign terrorist organization (Doyle, 2010). Therefore, unless the defense can prove otherwise, a minor could potentially be found culpable for providing material support to a terrorist organization without knowing his or her criminal actions did so (Ward, 2008).

This study contributed to the existing body of knowledge regarding: (a) the extent to which adult criminal offenders in the United States have used minors to commit crimes associated with the support of foreign terrorist organizations; and (b) the likelihood of the phenomenon occurring in the future. The results from the analysis will help law enforcement and counter-terrorism experts identify:

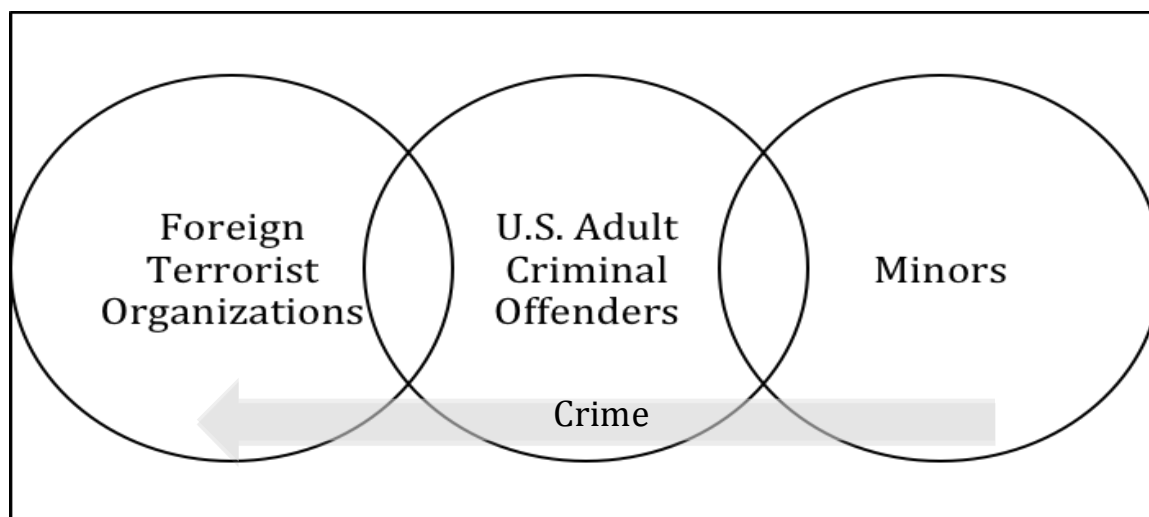
- individuals who are most likely to use minors to support foreign terrorist organizations (based on the criminal offenders' country of origin);
- where adult offenders are likely to use minors in the commission of such crime (based on the historical data of where these crimes have been committed); and
- what type of crimes adult criminal offenders are most likely to outsource to minors (based on an analysis of crime typology).

The study findings may also improve collaboration among community leaders to educate minors on the complex, dependent relationships between adult criminals located in the United States and foreign terrorist organizations, and provide an understanding of how their criminal involvement could result in serious legal consequences.

This study involved resource dependency theory (RDT) as a practical theoretical construct to understand this complex problem. Resource dependency theory was

especially useful because it posits that entities depend on each other for resources in order to survive (Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978). For the purpose of this study, *entities* were defined as foreign terrorist organizations, U.S. criminal offenders, and minors. *Resources* described crimes manifested through the illicit exchange of commodities, such as people, drugs, cash, shelter, and security. In the current study, shared dependent relationships existed between adult criminal offenders and minors, as well as the dependent relationship between adult criminal offenders and foreign terrorist organizations. Crime was the common interest among these relationships.

The examination of the independent variables in the study included testing the RDT by determining if a dependent relationship existed between minors and criminals in the United States, which affected the support of foreign terrorist organizations. Furthermore, this study extended application of the RDT through examination of the extent to which crimes committed by minors for adult criminal offenders in the United States affected the dependent relationship between the minors and foreign terrorist organizations (see Figure 1).



*Figure 1.* Application of RDT reflecting dependent relationships among three independent groups with crime designated as a shared resource among the groups. The arrow indicates that minors commit crime for adult offenders. Foreign terrorist organizations are end users of crime.

This chapter includes a brief overview of the existing literature associated with the research problem, followed by the problem and purpose statements. Next, the chapter presents the nature of the study, including a cursory overview of the research design, variables, sample size, data collection, and data analysis. Next, the chapter outlines the research question and hypothesis, as well as the study's theoretical framework, operational definitions, assumptions, limitations, delimitations, and scope. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the study's significance and implications for social change.

### **Background of the Problem**

A significant problem exists in the United States regarding adult criminals using minors to commit crimes associated with the support of foreign terrorist organizations. Adult criminal offenders in the United States and foreign terrorist organizations were not

conceptualized synonymously in this study; while terrorist activity is criminal, not every criminal activity qualifies as terrorism.

Various positions regarding the discreteness of the concepts of crime and terrorism are present in the literature. Most researchers have described these two concepts as distinct; however, others have posited that the concepts are difficult to separate and are often combined in ways that makes the concepts difficult to distinguish (Picarelli, 2012). For example, Waxman (2011) acknowledged that the lines between terrorism and criminality overlap and that placing them in separate categories is challenging. However, Waxman also concluded that despite such challenges, scholars and practitioners should separately categorize the concepts. Legally and strategically, different, respective laws and tactics should be applied in the treatment of crime and terrorism. Makerenko (2004) also conceded that even though the entities sometimes take on traits of the other, criminal offenders and terrorist organizations are different. Picarelli (2012) further agreed that crime and terrorism sometimes come together for a common goal, but are separate entities.

Developing a thorough description of the dependent relationship between crime and terrorism is critical to conceptualizing the background of this problem. The description furnishes historical insight into the types of commodities and services for which foreign terrorist organizations have depended on adult criminal offenders in the United States to provide, which is necessary to understand the extent to which minors are

used to that end. Hence, it was equally critical to include a description of the dependent relationship between adult criminal offenders and minors in the United States.

### **Foreign Terrorist Organizations and Adult Criminal Offenders**

Evidence shows that foreign terrorist organizations and U.S. criminal offenders are working together (Federal Bureau of Investigation, 2013). The vast assortment of tactics employed by terrorist organizations to collaborate with criminal offenders offer no obvious patterns of predictability or apparent limits to such collaboration (Federal Bureau of Investigation, 2013). For example, U.S. federal agents along the southern U.S. border have witnessed individuals interacting with the foreign terrorist organization Al Qaeda (Rizer & Glaser, 2011). In another case, criminal offenders operating in 24 separate financial institutions across the country were found to have provided monetary support to foreign terrorist organizations (Gordon, 2012). In another high profile case, an American citizen known as Jihad Jane was found guilty of conspiring with a foreign terrorist organization through the Internet (Halverson & Way, 2012).

The relationship between adult criminal offenders in the United States and foreign terrorist organizations is not a new phenomenon. Prior to the end of the Cold War, state-sponsored terrorism was rampant, but the international community was widely unaware of it (Picarelli, 2012). With the end of the Cold War, however, sources of support for state-sponsored terrorism became more apparent and the international community made a concerted effort to stop it (Picarelli, 2012). This change required foreign terrorist organizations to find support elsewhere (Stohl, 2008).

Other factors have also contributed to the bond between foreign terrorist organizations and U.S. criminal offenders. Globalization and the emergence of new and enhanced technologies have enabled easy communication between these groups (Jalata, 2011). Furthermore, resource-poor nations are vulnerable to these two groups, which have forces wreaking havoc and destruction on their lands (Hutchinson & O'Malley, 2007).

From a macro perspective, foreign terrorist organizations have primarily depended on adult criminal offenders to commit crimes that enhance their organizations' productivity, and, ultimately, their terrorist goals (Bălăceanu & Din, 2012). In exchange, foreign terrorist organizations have offered money to profit-motivated criminal offenders (Rollins & Wyler, 2013). When adult criminal offenders commit crimes in support of foreign terrorist organizations, they may operate independently, in intimate alliances with other offenders, or on behalf of an organized criminal organization.

### **Adult Criminal Offenders and Minors in the United States**

Aggressive use of minors, combined with their clandestine alliances with foreign terrorist organizations, renders some criminal offenders dangerous domestic and international threats. A couple of factors incentivize adult criminal offenders in the United States to employ minors to carry out criminal activities. First, using minors to commit crimes is advantageous because they are less conspicuous than adults during criminal pursuit (Shelley, 2009). Second, minors possessing aggregate risk factors, such as drug use, poor family structure, and negative peer pressure, are more susceptible to

being targets for predatory adult criminals (Esbensen, Peterson, Taylor, & Freng, 2009). Adult criminal offenders are also motivated to use minors because they believe criminal sentencing for minors is generally lighter than that of adults (Shelley, 2009). Thus, criminal offenders may intentionally seek out at-risk minors to carry out terrorist activities.

### **Problem Statement**

Some adult criminals in the United States use minors to commit crimes associated with the support of foreign terrorist organizations. Minors involved in criminal activities that support foreign terrorist organizations present a unique challenge to U.S. law enforcement because minors are less conspicuous than adults are in the commission of such crimes (Shelley, 2009). A possible cause of this problem is that minors are vulnerable to adult criminal offenders and are not aware that their crimes may be contributing to the support of a foreign terrorist organization (Shelley, 2009). Crime in support of foreign terrorist organizations has become a more significant issue for officials in recent years (Gardner & Killibrew, 2009). Although an extensive body of literature has linked adults to minors in the commission of crime, little is known about how adult offenders might use minors in the commission of crimes associated with the support of terrorist organizations (Shelley, 2009).

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of the study was to examine potential predictors of the likelihood of adult criminal offenders using minors for crimes associated with the support of terrorist



organizations. Although the potential legal punishment for minors who commit crimes in support of terrorist organizations is severe, adult criminal offenders can use minors who may or may not be aware that their participation in such criminal activity provides material support to terrorist organizations. I designed this study to generate information to inform parents, teachers, law enforcement professionals, and security analysts regarding the vulnerability of minors to adult criminals who involve using minors to commit crimes in support of terrorist organizations. In addition, I aimed to provide recommendations for resolving this problem.

### **Nature of the Study**

#### **Research Design and Variables**

This study included a quantitative analysis using a cross-sectional, quasi-experimental research design to facilitate my investigation of the research question. The primary research question allowed examination of the likelihood of U.S. criminal offenders using minors to commit crimes associated with the support of foreign terrorist organizations, based on the type of crime committed, the offender's country of origin, and the location of the crime. Each of the three independent variables was categorical: crime typology, criminal offender's country of origin, and location of crime. The dependent variable, the use of a minor in the commission of the crime, was dichotomous. The units of analysis in the analysis were U.S. criminal cases with information available regarding the use of minors in the commission of a crime, meaning that either *yes* the adult used a minor, or *no* the adult did not use a minor.

This study involved use of secondary data obtained from the U.S. Sentencing Commission (USSC), which publishes annual data on all felony and Class A misdemeanor crimes (U.S. Sentencing Commission [USSC], n.d.). I analyzed the collected data using the statistical software program SPSS to conduct binary logistic regression analysis, as suggested by Field (2009). Logistic regression is an appropriate test to use when the dependent variable is dichotomous and when one or more categorical or continuous independent variables exist (Field, 2009). The selected variables in this study justified the use of logistic regression analysis.

### **Sample Size and Data Collection**

This study exclusively involved secondary data collected from the USSC's public website. The data set consisted of 84,173 criminal cases of every felony and Class A misdemeanors recorded in the United States in 2012, in which a minor was or was not used in the commission of crimes associated with the support of terrorist organizations. The specific data set used, published by the Inter-University Consortium for Political and Social Research (ICPSR), contained the independent and dependent variables. This codebook with descriptions for the data is publicly available.

I initially used the entire data set from the public website to reduce the threat to external validity and to reduce bias. In the initial analyses, the data set was analyzed for missing values and to ensure accuracy of data entry. Out of the total sample of 84,173, 8,309 or 10% of those crimes involving use of minors were unaccounted for. Therefore, I considered 75,864 cases for use in the initial analyses. However, the initial analysis

uncovered a large disparity in number of cases in which minors were not used in the commission of a crime (75,609, 100%), compared to those in which minors were used (255, 0%). Therefore, I used a random generated identifier in Excel to randomly select 255 from 75,609 observations where minors were not used. I then merged these cases into the data set for subsequent analysis containing the cases in which minors were used in the commission of the crime. The final data set consisted of 510 cases, of which 255 observations used minors, and 255 observations did not use minors. The final analysis included these 510 cases.

### **Data Analysis**

After data collection, I analyzed data using the statistical software program SPSS 22.0. While SPSS offers various statistical test options, the most logical choice for analyzing data for this study was a binary logistic regression. Logistic regression is an appropriate test when the dependent variable is dichotomous and when one or more categorical or continuous independent variables exist (Field, 2009). In this study, the dependent variable reflected whether or not the case resulted in a conviction for using a child in the commission of a crime, or it did not. Therefore, the dependent variable was dichotomous.

### **Research Question and Hypothesis**

Previous literature has provided multiple examples of criminal offenders who participate in crimes in direct support of foreign terrorist organizations (Atkinson & Wein, 2010; Zdanowicz, 2009). Through this study, I endeavored to reveal the extent to which

criminal offenders exploit minors in crimes associated with the support of terrorism. The primary research question, which includes the unit of analysis as well as the dependent and independent variables for this study, was:

**RQ:** What is the likelihood that criminal offenders will use minors in cases of crime associated with supporting a terrorist organization based on the type of crime committed, country of origin, and location of crime?

I developed several hypotheses to reflect the different potential relationships that the independent variable separately has on the dependent variable:

- **H0:** There is no statistically significant relationship between crime typology, country of origin, and the location of a crime in the use of minors in cases of crimes associated with supporting a terrorist organization.
- **H1:** Some crimes, countries of origin, and location of crime are more likely than others to use minors in crimes associated with the support of a terrorist organization.

### **Theoretical Framework**

The theoretical framework for this study was based on RDT, which states that organizations rely on each other for resources in order to survive (Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978). Resource dependency theory states that as dependency increases, control and uncertainty decrease (Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978). Thus, RDT can be used to explain the dependent relationship among minors, U.S. criminal offenders, and foreign terrorist organizations. Control and uncertainty are tied to dependency under this framework and

some organizations choose not to establish relationships with other organizations or to limit their exchange of resources in order to maintain some level of control (Garrow, Nakashima, & McGuire, 2011). Therefore, the level of control and uncertainty organizations are willing to accept could explain variability in the degree of collaboration among them.

For the purposes of this dissertation, I treated minors, criminal offenders in the United States, and foreign terrorist organizations as separate but interdependent groups. Resource dependency theory is based on groups' reliance upon one another for the purpose of gaining resources (Archibald, 2007). The theory also claims that when any group falters in its ability to exchange resources, power and levels of dependency shift (Archibald, 2007). The group with the most resources holds the most power, while the group with the fewest resources retains the strongest dependency among the groups (Archibald, 2007).

For the purpose of the study, I grouped U.S. criminal offenders together because a U.S. federal court sentenced these criminals for committing a felony or Class A misdemeanor crime or crimes. From an organizational perspective, criminal offenders represent a massive conglomerate with numerous subsidiaries, each of which represents a different type of criminal offender. Criminal offenders who participate in money laundering, for example, characterize an organizational subsidiary different from those who participate in extortion, even though each belongs to the same group known as criminal offenders.

In this study, minors were defined as individuals aged 18 years and younger who had been used by adult criminal offenders to commit crimes associated with the support of terrorist organizations. For the purpose of the study, minors represented a single group. When examined through the lens of RDT, adult criminal offenders depended on minors for their services, and minors depended on adult criminal offenders for a variety of resources, such as shelter and money.

Different foreign terrorist organizations vary in their similarities and differences. Many foreign terrorist organizations differ in their ideologies, motives, and capabilities. On the other hand, the characteristics of some foreign terrorist organizations are similar. For the purposes of this study and relevant application of RDT, foreign terrorist groups represented a single group.

Examining these groups from an organizational perspective helped me to understand how one group's actions affected the other and discern that each required an exchange of various types of resources in order to survive, as suggested by Walker and McCarthy (2010). Examples of such support resources required to reach organizational objectives include:

- advertising and marketing in order to disseminate messages about products and services;
- recruiting personnel;
- infrastructure for internal and external communications;
- training for new and current members;

- logistical requirements, such as food, lodging, supplies, equipment, and transportation; and
- funding to pay for operational expenses.

Organizations usually possess the resources necessary for survival, but when they do not, they must find those resources elsewhere (Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978).

Another way to view interactions among organizations is as a system (Griffin, 2013). Organizations that depend exclusively on internal resources for operations are considered closed systems (Griffin, 2013). Conversely, in open systems, organizations interact with outside organizations for resource exchanges (Griffin, 2013). Sometimes survival is a function of an organization's ability or willingness to seek resources beyond its internal set of capabilities (Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978).

Several foreign terrorist organizations have operated in open systems to fill gaps in capabilities (Shelley, 2009). These open systems, or outsourcing, appear to be common among industry leaders in the fields of crime and terror. Research by Chermak, Freilich, and Simone (2010) provided a demonstration of the outsourcing of crime. The researchers reported that approximately 18% of all extremist groups collaborated with outsiders during criminal activities (Chermak et al., 2010). For example, some Mexican drug cartels outsourced car bombings to the National Liberation Army, a foreign terrorist organization, because the cartels lacked essential skills and supplies to internally launch the attacks (Sheinis, 2012). Likewise, Hezbollah, a foreign terrorist organization, has outsourced the smuggling of false documents, drugs, and humans across U.S. borders

(Perri & Brody, 2011). In the same manner, foreign terrorist organizations operating in open systems have depended on criminal offenders in the United States for their expertise in drug trafficking (Perri & Brody, 2011). Similarly, criminal offenders in the United States operate in an open system and outsource minors when the adults lack capabilities to conduct crimes on their own.

### **Key Terms**

The following presents key terms defined for this study:

*Domestic terrorism:* Terrorist activity that occurs when the person or group committing an act of terror, the targeted victims, and the spectators of the activity all occur in the same country (Sandler, 2010).

*Foreign terrorist organizations:* Foreign organizations designated by the U.S. Secretary of State in accordance with amended Section 219 of the Immigration and Nationality Act (Bush, 2001). To be considered a foreign terrorist organization, an organization must be foreign, participate in terrorist activities, and its activities must pose a threat to national security (U.S. Department of State, 2013). The terms *designated foreign terrorist organization* and *designated foreign terrorist organization* are used interchangeably throughout research.

*National security:* The concept that a nation has the ability to defend itself against external threats to its values, interests, and independence, and can legally maintain good order within the nation's borders in an effort to provide peace for its citizens (Udeanu, 2012).



*State sponsored terrorism:* A form of terrorism that occurs when a government covertly provides support to a terrorist organization (Byman & Kreps, 2010).

*Terrorists:* Politically motivated, organized individuals who use violence to attain ideological goals (Stohl, 2008).

*Weak state:* A geographic location where a government has little control of its legal territory (Makarenko, 2004).

### **Assumptions**

Assumptions refer to study aspects that researchers believe to be true, but which cannot be proven. Various assumptions were inherent to the study. Because this study involved use of archived data, I assumed that no biases were involved with the collection of the data, as suggested by Nachmias and Nachmias (2008). A second assumption was that the publisher of the data set had no hidden agendas that would account for missing data, in alignment with Boslaugh (2007). Furthermore, it was assumed that the person or persons collecting the data were adequately trained in data collection procedures (Boslaugh, 2007) and that all data were correctly and accurately entered into the database.

### **Limitations of the Study**

The first limitation of the study was that the data for this analysis were not current. The latest data set available when this study began consisted of sentencing information from 2011–2012. Therefore, the study reflected a snapshot in time, which may or may not be indicative of the results that could be found if more recent data were available at the time.

A second limitation of the study related to the use of a quantitative methodology. I selected a quantitative methodology because the goal of the research was to investigate statistically significant effects of concepts that could be numerically measured (Howell, 2010). According to Cooper and Schindler (2003), quantitative methods are useful for examining, confirming, or predicting theories of organizational phenomena. In addition, quantitative investigation allows for the examination of statistically significant relationships between variables (Swanson & Holton, 2005). While qualitative methods are useful for inductively exploring the underlying themes related to phenomena, rather than testing the significance of relationship between predetermined variables (Creswell, 2009), this was not the aim of this study. Thus, the methodological limitations associated with quantitative investigation were accepted in order to explore the topic statistically.

Further, previous quantitative researchers have not distinguished direct relationships between crimes and the support of terrorist organizations. The establishment of relationships between crime and terrorist organizations was solely based on information contained in extant literature, discussed in the literature review. While the data set included records of individuals who received additional sentencing for providing material support to terrorist organizations, I did not rely on these records alone to establish relationships between crimes and terrorist organizations. Litigators have experienced significant challenges proving the motives for crimes committed in support of terrorist organizations (Sutherland, 2013; Ward, 2008). Therefore, persons who have

committed crimes affiliated with terrorist organizations may not have been sentenced for supporting these terrorist organizations.

### **Delimitations of the Study**

Delimitations are self-imposed boundaries, applied for the purpose of maintaining focus in a study (Rudestam & Newton, 2007). A delimitation of this study was the focus only on crimes in which criminal offenders received sentencing for using minors to assist in the commission of crimes. Another delimitation was the narrow focus on certain types of crimes in which the literature indicated a link between criminal offenders and terrorist organizations. Prior literature has shown that offenders who had committed the crime of drug trafficking also had strong links to terrorist organizations (Farah, 2011; Hutchinson & O'Malley, 2007; Sheinis, 2012), therefore drug trafficking was a crime on which the study was focused.

### **Scope of the Study**

I examined the likelihood of criminal offenders in the United States using minors to commit crimes associated with support of terrorist organizations. In terms of a geographical focus, the study was limited to groups of minors and criminal offenders residing in the United States. However, the study also contained an international dimension by examining relationships between offenders and foreign terrorist organizations.

The uniqueness of this study existed in the examination of the extent to which criminal offenders used minors for crimes associated with support to terrorist

organizations. Therefore, the scope of the study was limited to U.S. criminal cases in which criminal offenders were sentenced for using minors in the commission of crimes. Criminal cases in which offenders were not sentenced for using minors were considered in the sample; however, the intent was not to focus on such cases. While the data in the study considered cases in fiscal year 2012, the goal of the research was to render it generalizable to analysis for future years.

### **Significance of the Study**

The significance of this study is that it contributes to the existing body of scholarly knowledge on the problem of U.S. criminal offenders supporting terrorist organizations by committing types of crimes, such as money laundering, drug trafficking, and the smuggling of products and goods (Shelley & Melzer, 2008). Additionally, I addressed gaps in research. For example, the study offered a quantitative examination of the relationship between offenders and terrorist organizations; of the prior studies that examined this relationship, few were quantitative (Holt, 2012; O'Brien, 2012; Perri & Brody, 2011). While many researches in the extant literature reported on minors in direct support of terrorist organizations (Ozerdem & Podder, 2011), previous researchers failed to examine how minors indirectly supported terrorist organizations through affiliation with criminal offenders, which the current study attempted to investigate. Previous research on the relationship between criminal offenders and terrorist organizations had an international focus (Hutchinson & O'Malley, 2007; Makarenko, 2004), while this dissertation study focused on the United States. Finally, findings may be used to increase

awareness among scholars and practitioners regarding the possible relationship among terrorist organizations, criminal offenders, and minors.

### **Summary**

Criminal offenders in the United States working in conjunction with terrorist organizations often recruit minors to commit crimes on their behalf. This recruitment of minors is because of their vulnerability and a common assumption that minors typically serve less severe sentences than adults do. However, minors rarely understand the legal consequences of their associations with adult criminal offenders, who may convince them to commit crimes in material support of terrorist organizations, which is a federal offense under U.S.C. 2339b.

Results from this investigation expanded existing knowledge on the relationships among minors, criminal offenders, and terrorist organizations in the United States, with an explicit focus on the use of minors for crimes associated with the support of terrorist organizations. Chapter 2 of this dissertation presents a review of the problem and purpose statements, as well as a synopsis and synthesis of the existing literature. The literature review includes a discussion of RDT, public policy related to providing support to terrorist organizations, various crimes supporting terrorism, criminal offenders and terrorist organizations, and criminal offenders and minors.

Chapter 3 details the research methodology, including a thorough discussion of the rationale behind methodological decisions and data set selection. Furthermore, Chapter 3 provides information regarding data collection, choice of variables, and

sampling strategy and procedures. Last, the chapter outlines existing threats to internal and statistical conclusion validity.

Chapter 4 reports the results of the study, including an analysis of the statistics from SPSS. Additionally, the chapter summarizes sampling procedures and data collection. The chapter also contains information regarding the study's descriptive statistics and statistical assumptions.

Chapter 5 concludes with an interpretation of the findings of the study. The current knowledge base on the topic is extended, describing limitations as they pertain to generalizability, validity, and reliability. Last, Chapter 5 ends with recommendations on how to apply the study findings to future research.

## Chapter 2: Literature Review

### **Introduction**

Terrorist organizations must have money to operate (Myres, 2012). Money to fund terrorist organizations can come from an almost endless variety of sources (Paul, 2010). One of the primary sources that funds terrorist organizations is crime (Freeman, 2011). Crime yields high revenues for terrorist organizations that can be invested in carrying out terrorist attacks. Criminal offenders who commit crimes in support of terrorist organizations may act alone, on behalf of groups or gangs, or part of international criminal organizations.

Criminal offenders, regardless of the capacity in which they operate, pose a dangerous threat to U.S. national security (Bălăceanu & Din, 2012). Large volumes of criminal offenders have exploited the lack of adequately funded communities by commandeering pockets of territory, committing acts of violence, and threatening the lives of witnesses and police officers (Gardner & Killebrew, 2009). Criminal offenders are aggressively smuggling illegal substances into the United States, in addition to trafficking approximately 1 to 2 million humans each year through the southern border (Rizer & Glaser, 2011).

Criminal offenders in the United States have also fostered relationships with the terrorist organizations that their crimes support (Farah, 2011). Southern U.S. border agents, for example, have witnessed members of the criminal group Mara Salvatrucha (MS-13) interacting with members of Al Qaeda, a U.S. Department of State Designated

Terrorist Organization (DTO; Rizer & Glaser, 2011). Furthermore, the United States has become a battle space for terrorist activity. As of 2012, approximately one thousand domestic terrorists and an equal number of international terrorists were believed to exist in the United States (Atkinson & Wein, 2010).

Criminal offenders have extended their tactical reach beyond collaboration with terrorist organizations to the use of minors in the commission of crimes (Shelley, 2009). What is not known is to what extent criminal offenders are using minors to commit crimes that support terrorist organizations (Shelley, 2009). Therefore, the complex nexus among minors, criminal offenders, and terrorist organizations warranted close examination.

### **Restatement of the Problem**

Criminal offenders in the United States are providing support to terrorist organizations (FBI, 2013). This problem is still occurring despite strict legislation designed to deter criminals from providing such support (McEntire, 2009). This problem plagues law enforcement officials and counterterrorism experts because it serves as an obstacle in their efforts to keep communities safe. A possible cause of this problem is the ease with which criminal offenders can use minors to commit crimes that may be in support of large-scale terrorist operations (Shelley, 2009). While Gardner and Killibrew (2009) have demonstrated that crime in support of terrorism has become a more significant issue for practitioners in recent years, Shelley (2009) recognized a lack of scholarly literature on the extent to which minors are used for crime in support of terrorist



organizations; therefore, the problem remains unresolved. I designed this study to investigate the extent to which criminal offenders use minors to commit crimes supporting terrorist organizations to aid in solving this problem.

### **Literature Search Strategy**

I searched several databases to identify relevant literature, including ProQuest Central, Homeland Security Digital Library, Political Science Complete, Lexis Nexis Academic, and SAGE Premier. I also used Google Scholar to identify additional articles and suitable books and governmental reports, as well as general Internet searches to identify news articles related to the topic.

Initially, I conducted the search by entering key words, such as *terrorism*, *crime*, and *minors*. In an effort to maximize results, I extended the search to include synonyms of minors such as *youth* and *children*. Finally, the search expanded with the use of the phrases *homeland security*, *domestic terrorism*, *material support*, and *terrorist networks*. In an effort to find relevant and current literature, I filtered the search to include dates between 2008 through 2013, with the exception of literature on theory, which included earlier dates.

Prior literature has shown a significant gap in research on this topic. For instance, numerous research articles provide information on the relationship between terrorist organizations and criminal offenders. A limited body of literature is available describing how adult offenders are using minors for crime. In addition, a dearth of literature offers

insight into how terrorist organizations benefit from crimes by which adult offenders used minors to commit.

Through my literature search, I noted a limited application of quantitative analysis on this topic. I found that most of the data required to conduct quantitative analysis is protected because of security concerns, and therefore is not available for students conducting research. Obtaining data from primary sources, such as criminal offenders who had been sentenced with providing material support to terrorist organizations, via any direct data collection instrument was impractical because of ethical issues. It was also unlikely that those alleged to have played some part in terrorist financing would be inclined to share their experiences (Wittig, 2009). Obtaining secondary data was almost as challenging. This finding aligned with Sageman's (2014) observation that while the U.S. federal government has funded terrorism research, it has failed to disclose primary source data necessary for academic analysts to advance research.

Because of these restrictions on data access, the majority of previous research on the association between terrorist organizations and criminal offenders is qualitative. Much of the research, similarly, with regard to the relationship between adult criminal offenders and minors is qualitative as well. I therefore selected a quantitative research methodology to address the lack of available quantitative studies on this topic.

### **Content and Organization of the Review**

The literature review for this study is divided into several subtopics directly related to the problem and the research question. The design emphasized the importance

of providing an understanding of the means by which terrorist organizations, adult criminal offenders, and minors depend on each other. The review also provides theoretical literature on RDT as it relates to the tenets of survival, uncertainty, control, and interdependence, each of which is relevant to the topic. The subtopics include RDT, the federal statute of material support to terrorist organizations, the relationship between criminal offenders and terrorist organizations, adult use of minors for crime, crime in support of terrorist organizations with emphasis on crime typology, the locations of crimes committed, and the countries of origin of criminal offenders of crime in support of terrorist organizations.

A substantial portion of the literature review is also dedicated to the statutory principles outlined with regard to providing material support to terrorist organizations. The reason this section is disproportionately weighted in comparison to other sections in the review is because of an effort to accentuate the complexity and controversial nature of the statute. Furthermore, this emphasis was intended to highlight the notion the statutory nebulousness in relation to providing material support to terrorist organizations that can result in the inability for prosecutors to connect the commission of a crime to providing material support.

In addition to the consideration of dedicated space in the review of the subtopics, I also considered the order of presentation. I presented a review of literature describing the challenges associated with prosecution under the statute prior to a review of the literature on crime typology. The literature on crime typology reflected the crimes that

available evidence connected the crimes to support to terrorist organizations. However, because of prosecutorial challenges, in some cases individuals may have been sentenced for crimes committed but were not simultaneously sentenced for providing material support. Insight into the complexity of the statute and its prosecutorial challenges is essential to a subsequent understanding of the logic behind variable selection in the forthcoming research methodology. The subtopics location of crimes committed and country of origin of the offenders strategically concludes the literature review, as domestic and international policy are predicated on jurisdiction.

### **Theoretical Foundation**

#### **Literature on RDT**

Multiple studies on RDT are available; however, the selection of appropriate application of the literature regarding the theory was important for the review. Dress and Heugens' (2013), through a meta-analysis, noted that RDT continues to serve as a suitable explanation for understanding why organizations interact. According to RDT, organizations rely on each other because they internally lack resources necessary for survival (Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978). In addition, as organizational dependency increases, organizational control decreases (Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978). For the purpose of this research, I viewed minors, U.S. criminal offenders, and foreign terrorist organizations through the lens of RDT, as separate but discrete, interdependent groups. This perspective made RDT a relevant framework for this study.

### **Relevance of RDT to the Research Question and Variables**

Through theoretical application of RDT, the research question guided an examination of the likelihood that criminal offenders will use minors to commit crimes associated with supporting terrorist organizations, based on the type of crime committed, location of the crime, and the offender's country of origin. Considering minors perform particular types of crimes renders the performance of such crimes not only as services but also resources that are exchanged with criminal offenders for other resources. I explored to what extent the types of crime contribute to criminal offenders' likelihood to use a minor in the use of stated resource. Similarly, through the application of RDT, I explored the extent to which location of crime serves as a resource and contributes to the likelihood that a criminal offenders will use minors to commit a crimes in association with supporting terrorist organizations. Analysis concluded that location of crime enables criminals seeking to exploit minors in such a manner.

Likewise, country of origin may also be considered a resource among criminal offenders using minors for crimes associated with supporting terrorist organizations as well. Criminal offenders from select regions of the globe offer unique resources that are more or less valuable to minors, depending on the location of that region. The study involved examination of the extent to which country of origin serves as a resource for exchange and contributes to the likelihood that criminal offenders will use minors for crime.

The concept of survival is a major component of RDT. For survival, terrorist organizations rely heavily on active support from criminal offenders for financing, safe havens, equipment, manpower, and intelligence (Paul, 2010). This support translates into logistical requirements that must be present in order for the terrorism to occur (Atkinson & Wein, 2010). Paul (2010) noted that terrorist organizations require resources and look to external sources to obtain those resources, a finding in alignment with RDT. Hence, application of the theory served to explain what the implications were for each of the groups as reliance among the groups changed, such as survival, uncertainty, control, and interdependence, as suggested by Pfeffer and Salancik (1978).

### **RDT and Survival**

Grabosky and Stohl (2010) found that RDT helped to explain the intersection between crime and terrorism. The authors stated that resources a terrorist organization needs to survive include guns, explosives, cash, and community support (Grabosky and Stohl, 2010). If a terrorist organization's requirements fluctuate, the level and type of support they require varies as well (Paul, 2010).

Multiple studies have provided evidence supporting RDT and its premise that survival is the result of the ability and willingness of organizations to externally seek out essential resources. Nongovernmental organizations, for example, rely on external resources for survival. For example, nonprofit sports programs in Germany cannot survive without the external provision of a strong infrastructure and additional vital resources (Wicker & Breuer, 2011). Xia (2011) also found that the survival of

partnership corporations in neighboring countries had a positive correlation with the reciprocal exchanges among them.

In one study, Rehli and Jager (2011) analyzed the survival of nongovernmental organizations and found that survival is due primarily to charitable donations of external actors. Henry (2011) tested the relationships between organizations that collaborated with external organizations in exchange for resources they believed they could draw from the organizations. Henry's findings contrasted with other studies, concluding that RDT did not serve as a viable theoretical explanation for understanding the exchange that occurred in these relationships.

### **RDT and Uncertainty**

Another principle of RDT is that dependency on external organizations is a function of an organization's lack of comfort with uncertainty (Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978). The level of comfort with uncertainty may serve as an explanation regarding why some terrorist organizations turn to external criminal offenders or criminal organizations for assistance in the commission of crime. Likewise, the frequency with which criminal organizations use minors in the commission of crimes may vary depending on their level of comfort with uncertainty.

According to Myres (2012), terrorist organizations act as companies in which external actors make investments. Myres stated that terrorist organizations view working with external actors as *investment risk* and that this determines whether to depend on these external actors based on the expected yield (e.g., political gain). The researcher

similarly described risk to the external actors, or *risk to the investor*, as the price of doing business with a terrorist organization, such as loss of personal liberty through detention or murder of family members (Myres, 2012).

Therefore, organizations take necessary steps to reduce uncertainty. For instance, Singh (2007) found that companies recognized minority managers as assets possessing unique skills and business contacts, and that by hiring them onto their boards of directors the companies reduced uncertainty with competitors. Similarly, another researcher analyzed the relationship between demographic diversity among boards of directors and company success rates with international firms and found that companies that integrated minorities into their boards had a decreased risk and uncertainty in working with foreign firms, and experienced a lower level of dependence on them (Rivas, 2012). This aligned with Zhang's (2012) finding that companies view their boards of directors as assets when their board members include minorities who have external social connections that could benefit the companies.

### **RDT and Control**

Another tenet of RDT is control. The theory posits that a higher level of organizational dependence corresponds to a lower level of organizational control (Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978). Casciaro and Piskorski (2005) found that when control became unequal among organizations, it created conditions for organizations with the least amount of control to fall victim to corporate takeovers. Similarly, a qualitative analysis of a subcontracting company revealed that its degrees of dependency on the companies



on which it relied fluctuated (Hansen & Rasmussen, 2013). The examined subcontractor's level of dependency on a particular company changed over time, as did the level of power that the company experienced.

Some organizations have found that the associated cost of resource dependence is not worth giving up control. For example, Garrow, Nakashima, and McGuire (2011) found that religious organizations were less likely to offer support in exchange for federal funding for government-based social welfare programs than secular organizations. In this case, concerns that the government would mandate practices contrary to their religious values outweighed the religious organizations' needs for funding (Garrow et al., 2011).

A terrorist organization's dependence on various types of financing affects its control (Freeman, 2011). Receiving government funding or state sponsorship equates to sacrificing control and is therefore unattractive to many terrorist organizations (Freeman, 2011). Conversely, it is beneficial for terrorist organizations to depend on crime for financing because this allows them to exercise control and be independent of state sponsorship (Freeman, 2011).

### **RDT and Interdependence**

Further, when organizations equally rely on each other they may reach a state of interdependence, which occurs when organizations willfully exchange resources, and thus maintain independence (Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978). A willful exchange of resources can also connect otherwise dissimilar groups (Price, Schau, & Thomas, 2013).

Hutchinson and O'Malley (2007) illustrated that differences between criminal

organizations and terrorist organizations were so high that the two would not come together. However, the researchers conceded that when each of the groups could benefit from each other that they would come together, as long as the groups could remain autonomous and maintain their respective senses of identity (Hutchinson & O'Malley, 2007). The researchers described the relationship as *parasitic* and *episodic* (Hutchinson & O'Malley, 2007). Finklea (2009) agreed with Hutchinson and O'Malley by pointing out that despite their dissimilarities, criminal offenders and terrorist organizations come together because the terrorists need criminals for crimes, such as forging documents and smuggling weapons in exchange for cash.

Groups opting to maintain independence from other groups may suffer consequences. Bowden and Inch's (2013) analysis suggested this, highlighting the negative consequences that managers of successful Japanese steel mills suffered by avoiding collaboration with outside organizations. Unpredictably, the steel mill market shifted and left Japanese managers isolated without adequate suppliers and vulnerable to a loss of market share to competing Australian conglomerates (Bowden & Inch, 2013). On the other hand, groups that exercised interdependence were found to experience negative consequences when they did break away from one another because they forfeited established chains of supply (Malatesta & Smith, 2011). Casciaro and Piskorski (2005) concurred with Malatesta and Smith (2011) that interdependence did not afford an optimal organizational environment because even in circumstances of equal exchange, disparity of control cannot always be prevented.

### **RDT in Similar Studies**

Katz, Maguire, and Roneck (2002) conducted a quantitative bivariate logistic regression analysis from a survey of 285 large police departments and determined RDT explained the creation of specialized gang units. The authors concluded that funding is tied to the life of the units, and therefore, municipalities created gang units in order to obtain funding (Katz et al., 2002). The authors also stated that police officers are likely to identify gang-related problems in communities that may not exist in order to acquire additional resources (Katz et al., 2002).

Burruss, Giblin, and Schafer (2010) also used secondary data in a quantitative analysis to measure the extent to which RDT influenced organizational behavior between state and federal governments. The researchers found resource dependence is prevalent between the two because state governments depended on the federal government for funding, and the federal government relied on the states to independently implement its programs (Burruss et al., 2010). States will implement a variety of homeland security programs to qualify for the funding (Burruss et al., 2010).

### **Terrorism and Criminal Justice**

Terrorism has no bounds. While terrorism may be more prevalent in countries, such as Pakistan or Iraq, it is not contained within and should not be categorized by the boundaries of any country. Terrorism can be categorized in regional terms; for example, referring to terrorism in the Mideast or Latin America. Still, the continuous dynamic

nature of terrorism poses emerging threats, seeping across even regional boundaries and creating a boundless effect on an international scale.

Given that terrorism remains an international problem, justifiably its existence warrants an international solution. Power (2014) recognized the negative effects of terrorism on global security, but neither the United Nations Security Council (UNSC, 2009) nor any international court maintains the authority to prosecute individuals for the commission of crimes associated with terrorism. The UNSC has the authority to refer criminal cases to the International Criminal Court (Trahan, 2013). However, the International Criminal Court's jurisdictional authority is limited to prosecution of odious offenses resulting in widespread "acts against humanity" (UNSC, 2009). Therefore, despite the UNSC's acknowledgement that terrorism is a transnational problem, it has no international solution. The International Criminal Court views the prosecution of crimes associated with terrorism as a national responsibility (UNSC, 2009). Consequently, nation states are left to develop legislation and criminal statutes at the domestic level (UNSC, 2009). This legislative sovereignty has resulted in a wide diversity of antiterrorism policies around the globe.

### **Material Support to Terrorist Organizations**

#### **Overview of 18 U.S.C. 2339B**

Support to terrorist organizations has been a longstanding problem for the United States. Acts of terrorism occurring over time have resulted in a series of court cases and generated a litany of federal statutes intended to deal with individuals who provided

material support (Ridley & Alexander, 2011). One of the earliest pieces of legislation designed to address the problem of providing support to terrorists was the Espionage Act of 1917, signed into law during World War I, which made it a crime for individuals to speak out against the draft or to speak out in favor of declared enemies of the United States (Abel, 2013).

Following the World Trade Center bombings in 1994, Congress enacted the Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act, which included 18 U.S.C. 2339A, Support of Terrorism. This statute made it illegal for individuals who plan to commit or have committed crimes in support of terrorism. Excluded in 18 U.S.C. 2339A was the criminal connection to terrorist organizations. Subsequently, President Clinton signed into law the Anti-Terrorism and Effective Death Penalty Act, which clarified the definition of material support (Doyle, 2010). Furthermore, embedded in the Act was 18 U.S.C. 2339B, Support of a Designated Terrorist Organizations, which made it illegal for individuals to provide support for or conceal support to terrorist organizations (Yaster, 2008). The significance of this unique legislation is that the government designed it to prevent acts of terrorism as it focused on support activities that occur prior to an act of terrorism, rather than solely recognizing an act of terrorism by itself (Tunis, 2012). A person could be found guilty of supporting terrorist organizations, regardless if or when an act of terrorism occurred.

After the 2001 terrorist attacks on the United States, a string of laws passed to combat financial support to terrorist organizations (Ridley & Alexander, 2011). The

2001 International Emergency Economic Powers Act froze terrorist (Ridley & Alexander, 2011). Then, President Bush signed into law the USA PATRIOT Act in order to apply the strictest penalties possible for individuals providing material support to terrorist organizations (Doyle, 2010).

### **Prosecutorial Challenges With 18 U.S.C 2339B**

Challenges exist for prosecutors in determining guilt for persons associated with providing material support to terrorist organizations. Wide interpretation of the controversial law, as well as the question of its constitutionality, present the primary challenges. Researchers and legal practitioners alike have argued for and against the constitutionality of the statute in criminal cases. Both opposing and supporting arguments on constitutionality of the policy were adequately highlighted in the controversial Holder versus Humanitarian Law Project (Savage, 2010).

The case of Holder versus Humanitarian Law Project resulted in the determination that a retired attorney who traveled to Turkey to give free legal advice to the Kurdistan Workers Party, a designated foreign terrorist organization, was guilty of providing material support (Savage, 2010). The attorney's futile defense was that first, he did not know that he was supporting a terrorist organization and second, his humanitarian efforts were protected under the 1st Amendment (Savage, 2010). The legal standard applied in the Holder versus Humanitarian Law case became the standard by which future cases of providing material support would be judged, such as the Al

Haramain Islami Foundation Incorporated versus U.S. Department of Treasury and Domestic Implications (Sutherland, 2013).

The Al Haramain Islami Foundation Incorporated was a split-based organization, as part of it was located in Saudi Arabia and part of it was located in Oregon (Sutherland, 2013). The parent company in Saudi Arabia was designated as a foreign terrorist organization (Sutherland, 2013). The Al Haramain Islami Foundation Incorporated in Oregon successfully fought against a charge that it supported the foreign terrorist organization in Saudi Arabia on the argument that the organization in totality was not foreign; rather, it was “quasi-domestic” (Sutherland, 2013). The Holder versus Humanitarian Law Project standard considered in judgment of this case did not apply because the court ruled that when an organization is partly based in the United States, no part of the organization should be designated as a foreign terrorist organization. In contrast, the Holder versus Humanitarian Law Project standard did apply in the United States versus Mehanna case (Pochon, 2013).

Tareek Mehanna was found guilty of violating Section 2339B after being caught translating Al Qaeda propaganda videos and distributing them on the Internet (Abel, 2013). Abel (2013) supported the decision of the courts, but Pochon (2013) argued in support of Mehanna’s and the American Civil Liberties Union, that Mehanna’s 1st Amendment rights of freedom of speech had been violated through application of the statute. Nevertheless, Pochon (2013) warned that under wide interpretation of the statute, individuals such as journalists, translators, as well as researchers, through collaboration,

could be at risk for providing material support to terrorist organizations despite their lack of intent.

Price, Rubinstein, and Price (2012) has similar views as Pochon (2013) by declaring the policy is so broadly defined, almost any actions could be mistakenly categorized as providing material support. Furthermore, holes in the policy can result in individuals found to be guilty under this statute for committing crimes even when no established intent to support terrorist organizations exists (Abel, 2013). Paul (2010) described this type of scenario as passive support, meaning that people may not realize that their actions contribute to supporting terrorist activity.

The findings Pochon (2013) and Price, Rubinstein, and Price (2012) described with regard to the risk involved under this statute were significant to this study because they highlighted the idea that individuals do not need to have intended to support terrorist organizations through their actions in order to have been found guilty of the crime. Therefore, minors committing crimes for adult offenders may also be at risk of being found guilty of supporting terrorist organizations, even in the absence of intent. In addition, individuals committing crimes on behalf of terrorist organizations may be forced into doing so; therefore, the statute neglects that they are victims and not criminals (Naser-Hall, 2013). Aziz (2003) similarly uncovered gaps in the policy, which brought its constitutional veracity and loose interpretation into question.

To illustrate, the Department of State designated three separate charitable Islamic organizations as foreign terrorist organizations, which brought into question whether it



was constitutional for individuals to donate money to the organizations. According to Aziz (2003), a person's right to donate money to a charitable organization is protected under the 1st Amendment. However, the courts did not favor the defendants in this case because Section 2339B not only expanded the types of organizations defined as foreign terrorist organizations, but also broadened the definition of providing material support and stated that a person should have reasonably known that their actions were in support of terrorist organizations (Aziz, 2003).

Said (2011) agreed with Aziz (2003), declaring that the statute is flawed in its provision that charitable organizations can be designated as foreign terrorist organizations by the government and moreover not be told what they can do to appeal the designation. Said (2011) also found fault in the "money is fungible" clause in the statute, which assumes that when a person donates money to an organization, it frees up other funds for the organization to use in support of terrorist activity (Said, 2011). While Said subscribed to the idea that charitable organizations are victims vulnerable to the flaws with the statute, other research exists that indicated otherwise.

For instance, during an analysis of 24 case studies of terrorist financing, Gordon (2012) found that in three of those cases charitable organizations had diverted funds intended for charity to terrorist activity. The case analysis suggests that a strict interpretation of the statute may be necessary to adequately identify dubious charitable organizations actively in support of terrorism. Ridley and Alexander (2011) believed that

diversion of funds from charitable to terrorist organizations is so rampant that law enforcement and financial regulatory agencies continue to overlook financing activities.

Ward (2008), on the other hand, defied the premise that the statute violated human rights. In contrast, the researcher found the statute is not tough enough and identified two problems with it. First, the statute does not address terrorist organizations that may form domestically because it only speaks of foreign terrorist organizations (Ward, 2008). Second, the statute states that a person must have knowingly supported a terrorist organization in order to be convicted of the crime of providing material support (Ward, 2008).

Whether a person knew something or not is a subjective judgment associated with a person's state of mind, and it is the burden of the prosecution to prove what the person was thinking (Ward, 2008). It would be the burden of the prosecution, for example, to prove whether someone had knowledge that a charitable organization was a front company for a terrorist organization at the time he or she made donations to that organization. As a result of the challenges associated with proving that a person had prior knowledge that his or her actions were in support of a terrorist organization, prosecutions for material support to terrorist organizations are high but the convictions are not (Ward, 2008). Between 2001 and 2006, the government prosecuted 162 cases of material support to terrorists, but only eight resulted in convictions (Ward, 2008).

Given these obstacles, in some cases prosecutors can secure convictions in crimes, but cannot prove that the crimes in question provided material support to terrorist

organizations. Consider hypothetically a case of a person smuggling drugs into the United States and that person in turn sent the profits from the drug smuggling operation to a terrorist organization. The prosecutor for this notional case may have obtained evidence that the drug smuggling operation occurred, but could not obtain evidence that the funds from the drug smuggling transaction had been transferred to a terrorist organization. In this example, the person would have been convicted of the crime of smuggling drugs, but not for providing material support.

Prior literature clearly exposed the positive relationship between criminal activity and providing material support to terrorist organizations. Researchers demonstrated that without the resources that crime yields, terrorist organizations cannot survive. The following section provides an overview of this relationship.

### **Crime and Material Support**

Prior to 2001, crime and terrorism were considered separate (Bălăceanu & Din, 2012). However, pursuant to the 2001 terrorist attacks on the United States, it became clear to the U.S. government and to law enforcement that links between terrorist organizations and criminal activity present a threat to national security (Bălăceanu & Din, 2012).

Researchers have indicated that U.S. police believe terrorist organizations have collaborated with some other criminal group (Chermak et al., 2010). Still, in spite of this enlightenment and consequential policy initiatives, communication and collaboration continues to occur between terrorist organizations and groups of criminal offenders that

are still unknown (Mainas, 2012). Therefore, additional analysis must exist to uncover the difficult to detect “dark networks” (Mainas, 2012).

According to the White House Strategy to Combat Transnational Organized Crime (Office of the White House, 2011), almost half of criminal organizations that threaten U.S. national security collaborated with terrorist organizations. Crimes cells desperate for money have committed crimes for terrorist organizations, including smuggling weapons of mass destruction (Sheinis, 2012). Moreover, since 2001, many of the individuals charged with failed terrorist plots had prior criminal records (Bovenkerk, 2011). Networks of criminals and terrorists form and disband as necessary for a distinct purpose (Farah, 2011). Picarelli (2012) supported the idea that groups of criminal offenders and terrorist organizations are separate from one another and only come together for a common purpose. Gustafson (2010) illustrated a “five block war” in which significant threats to national security are divided into large pieces, two of which are crime and terrorism. The author stated that when pieces are linked, it causes a significant threat to national security (Gustafson, 2010). In contrast, some researchers believe that the strength of the link between terrorist organizations and criminal offenders is inflated.

Hutchinson and O’Malley (2007), for example, found that even though terrorist organizations and criminal offenders came together in specific cases, many terrorist organizations have adequate internal capability, which precluded them from needing to seek relationships with criminal offenders. Their research indicated that groups of criminal offenders tend to be in competition with terrorist organizations, and for that

reason the two are not likely to collaborate (Hutchinson & O'Malley, 2007).

Ideologically, terrorist organizations possess unique political goals and possess trust issues with outsiders, consequently compelling them against collaboration (Stohl, 2008).

Williams (2012) agreed with Hutchinson and O'Malley (2007) in part, asserting that criminal offenders who are members of cartels had not collaborated with terrorist organizations. Weisburd (2009) concluded that a relationship was unlikely based on a lack of evidence that terrorists and criminal offenders had not communicated or coordinated with each other through the Internet collaboration site YouTube.

However, a lack of communication between criminal offenders and terrorist organizations on an Internet site fails to make a strong argument that a relationship does not exist. In fact, despite ideological differences between terrorist organizations and criminal offenders, commonalities motivate them to come together (Finklea, 2009). Both terrorist organizations and criminal offenders have been known to seek financial gain, and as a result have looked to each other as a means to that end (Finklea, 2009).

Furthermore, terrorist organizations and many criminal offenders have a common goal to intimidate the government, which cultivates cooperation between them (Perri & Brody, 2011). Each have the perception that a failed state is beneficial and both operate best together in environments where the government or law enforcement is weak or corrupt (Perri & Brody, 2011). Myres (2012) referred to terrorist organizations as firms that manufacture commodities of brutality. This idea aligns with the black hole theory,

which declares that terrorist organizations and criminal offenders freely operate together in areas of weak and unstable governments (Makarenko, 2004).

Analysis has shown that some terrorist organizations have deprioritized ideology in place of profit-making criminal activity (O'Brien, 2012). In some instances, terrorist organizations have pursued criminal activity but have pretended to hold onto their ideological principals in order to deceive the population that they are looking out for their interests, when in fact they are interested in realizing a profit (Makarenko, 2004). A qualitative case analysis exemplifies a DTO, Abu Sarif Group (ASG), that transformed from a pure terrorist organization to a dangerous profit making criminal group (O'Brien, 2012).

In an effort to explain such transformation, Makarenko (2004) pointed to convergence theory, which posits that over time groups move back and forth along a linear scale where crime is on one side and terrorism is on the other. The author stated that criminal groups take on the traits of terrorist groups and vice versa and it is at that middle point that they converge into a single entity (Makarenko, 2004). Some criminal groups, for example, that were solely profit-driven over time have taken on the traits of terrorist organizations by embracing more politically motivated acts (Ayling, 2011). Similarly, Mexican drug cartels have adopted tactics practiced by terrorist organizations, such as setting improvised explosive devices and detonating car bombs (Williams, 2012).

Other researchers suggested time is not a factor in whether terrorist organizations participate in criminal activity. Some organizations are simply hybrid, meaning that they

are as likely to commit acts of terror as they are to commit acts of crime (Ballina, 2011). The group Los Zetas, for instance, illustrated that a terrorist organization can transform from acting as a terrorist organization to a purely criminal organization in a single day (Campbell, 2010).

### **Predicting Use of Minors in Material Support**

In this study, I explored the likelihood that adult offenders will use minors to commit crimes that may be in support of terrorist organizations, based on three predictor variables: crime typology, location of crime, and country of origin. The following sections are dedicated to a review of the literature on the outcome variable, the use of minors, and each of the predictor variables: crime typology, location of crime, and country of origin, respectively. In addition, the sections detail justification for the selection of the predictor variables.

### **USSC Guidelines for Use of a Minor**

The USSC is the federal agency responsible for providing sentencing guidelines to judges for use in issuing sentences for various types of criminal activity (Office of Public Affairs, USSC, 2012). The commission's sentencing guidelines state that it is illegal to use a minor in the commission of a crime (USSC, n.d.). When an offender uses a minor in the commission of a crime, agency guidelines mandate that the offender will receive additional sentencing above that which he or she would have received for the commission of the crime if committed alone (USSC, n.d.). The USSC states that in accordance with Section 3B1.4 of the USSC guidelines, the level of the sentence should

be heightened if the person committing the crime “used or attempted to use” a person who is less than 18 years old in the commission of a crime (USSC, n.d.).

### **Adults Criminals Using Minors for Crime**

Documented cases revealed that adults have taken advantage of minors by using them to commit crimes (Mastropolo, 2013). In one case, a mother gave away custody of her son to a child predator. The predator in turn starved the son until he agreed to kidnap and have sex with a 2-year old girl. Even though the adult predator had abused the boy in many ways, the court determined the boy was guilty of the crime.

The case of Lee Malvo, a 15 year-old teen was another highly publicized case of an adult using a minor for crime. Malvo’s attorneys argued that John Mohammed coerced Malvo in committing multiple murders for him (“Malvo,” 2006). Eventually Malvo, at age 17, was convicted of murder and terrorism (“Malvo,” 2006) .

Picarelli (2012) described third party or facilitators as individuals who act as intermediaries between criminal and terrorist organizations. Minors may serve as such intermediaries. Shelley (2009) noted that minor participation of crimes in support of terrorism has not been thoroughly analyzed in academia. The impetus for adult criminals to use minors for crime stems from their belief that minors are inconspicuous and have a low likelihood of incurring heavy sentences (Shelley, 2009).

Adult criminal offenders are more likely to use minors for crimes that require a high level of technical skill. For instance, crimes such as money laundering transactions from which terrorist organizations benefit, and which require a high level of



technological electronic skills, are likely to involve minors for their technical expertise in the completion of such transactions (Choo, 2013). It is also likely that highly skilled minors have been involved in cybercrimes in support of terrorist organizations (Holt, 2012). Holt (2012) stated that it is difficult to know for certain the perpetrator of a cybercrime; it could have been committed by a single skilled youth. Shelley (2009) agreed with Holt and Choo's assessment that it is critically beneficial for criminal and terrorist groups alike to use minors because they routinely possess requisite technological skills, such as creating websites, Internet posting, and chatting.

Furthermore, the majority of available literature revealed that minors, who have participated in crimes linked to supporting terrorist organizations, belong to gangs or cartels. A 2014 news report stated that teens have been recently hired by Mexican drug cartels to carry drugs from Mexico through the U.S. border states (CBS News, n.d.). DTOs frequently use minors as young as 12 years old as couriers because they perceive them as low risk (CBS News, n.d.). Moreover, cartels have been reported to tell minors that they will not face heavy sentencing for smuggling drugs ("U.S. Children Latest Mules," 2010). Therefore, because adult offenders perceive minors as vulnerable and low risk, it is understandable that border control agents recently found a significant increase of minors (also U.S. citizens) smuggling drugs from Mexico into the southern border of Arizona on behalf of drug cartels ("U.S. Children Latest Mules," 2010).

Moreover, hundreds of thousands of humans are trafficked through Mexico into the United States every year, many of whom are minors used by adult criminal offenders

for prostitution and illegally transporting drugs and other commodities (Walters & Davis, 2011). Additionally, Mexican drug cartels, such as MS13, that operate in cities all across the United States are recruiting minors from schools and communities for use in crime at extremely young ages (Killebrew & Bernal, 2010). Similarly, the cartel Los Zetas reportedly recruited minors ages 15 through 18 years old for its criminal training camps in Mexico and Guatemala (Campbell, 2010).

### **Crime Typology**

Justification for selection of crime typology as a predictor was grounded in the literature, which signifies a relationship between different types of crimes and the support of terrorist organizations. Therefore, categorization of the types of crimes in support of terrorist organizations is useful. Categorization not only provides a historical representation of the extent to which criminals have uniquely committed certain types of crimes in support of terrorist organizations, but also because it can be used as a reference to learn from the past (Waxman, 2011).

Terrorist organizations obtain funding through a variety of crimes, among them trafficking of arms, drugs, weapons, humans, art, as well as through tax evasion, money laundering, and burglary (Balaceanu & Din, 2012). Other crimes, such as kidnapping, charity fraud, mortgage fraud, and identity theft, have been also been linked to funding in support of terrorist organizations (Perri & Brody, 2011). Closer examination of these crimes begins with evidence that trafficking weapons were used to support terrorism. In a study of more than 450 terrorists, Atkinson and Wein (2010) found that approximately

40% used or exchanged firearms illegally and the same percentage used or distributed explosive devices. The DTO Hezbollah has worked with criminal offenders in Mexican drug cartels to smuggle weapons, money, and people into the United States (Sheinis, 2012). Individuals belonging to U.S. gangs have graduated to committing serious crimes with international reach to terrorist organizations, such as drug trafficking, human trafficking, and money laundering (Ayling, 2011).

Researchers have found terrorist organizations to launder money, hiding the genesis of the funds in order to prevent authorities from tracing the funds (Gordon, 2012). In countries that do not comply with global fiscal regulations, it is easy for criminals or terrorists to use pre-paid cash cards and mobile money transfer devices, such as cell phones, to instantaneously transfer illegally acquired currency across borders into legitimate companies (Choo, 2013). Terrorists organizations practice trade-based money laundering, which is a tactic used to over or under invoice goods to other nations, as a means to financing terrorist activities (Zdanowicz, 2009).

Shelley (2012) argued that human trafficking has stood out among other types of crimes as a high-profit, low-risk activity in which criminals participate to generate funds. Therefore, in view of the relationship between criminal offenders and terrorist organizations, evidence supports why criminals would use human trafficking generated funds to support terrorist organizations. Researchers have consistently confirmed that human trafficking is a favored crime among criminal offenders in the support of terrorist organizations (Hesterman, 2013; Rizer & Glaser, 2011).

Human traffickers force individuals into committing crimes for the purpose of generating revenues (Rizer & Glaser, 2011). For their efforts, the traffickers net between 7 and 10 billion dollars a year (Rizer & Glaser, 2011). From a human trafficker's perspective, humans represent a source of supply or a commodity, by which they benefit enormously from the use of a single trafficked individual (Shelley, 2012). Criminal offenders, for example, could abuse one trafficked human repeatedly for participation in multiple profit-generating crimes, such as smuggling drugs and weapons, prostitution, or selling pornography (Shelley, 2012).

Drug trafficking, much like human trafficking, is a crime used to fund terrorist organizations (Hutchinson & O'Malley, 2007). Even though Williams (2012) denied the relationship between drug trafficking organizations and terrorism, noteworthy evidence concluded that the terrorist organization ASG heavily participated in drug trafficking operations to fund their terrorist goals (Ballina, 2011). To further illustrate the connection, in 2010, individuals in Venezuela and Columbia shipped cocaine via Liberia to Europe for Al Qaeda (Farah, 2011). Evidence also revealed the terrorist organizations Hezbollah and Al Qaeda are both associated with organized drug trafficking organizations to finance their terrorist activities (Finklea, 2009). Gustafson (2010) and Rizer and Glaser (2011) each described the prevalence of drug trafficking as so severe that it contributes to the threat of national security.

Another crime that has a history of supporting terrorist organizations is cybercrime. Examples of cybercrime are shutting down government servers, setting up

virtual obstacles that disallow system access, destroying or tampering with the integrity of stored data, and using the Internet to spread hateful propaganda (Holt, 2012). In addition, some terrorist organizations have used the Internet to advertise their propaganda on the websites of criminal groups (Holt, 2012).

As previously stated, Weisburd (2009) believed that collaboration between criminal offenders and terrorist organizations was unlikely to occur through the Internet. His findings notwithstanding, other researchers have indicated that terrorist organizations have used the Internet as a recruitment tool for potential criminal offenders. Colleen LaRose, for example, also known in the media as “Jihad Jane” was recruited by a terrorist organization to commit acts of crime in its support (Halverson & Way, 2012). Similarly, criminal and terrorist groups have been found to use the Internet to misrepresent themselves to solicit donations, luring individuals to donate money in support of their organizations through what appeared to be a legitimate charitable website, when in reality funds had been funneled to a terrorist organization (Lennings, Amon, Brummert, & Lennings, 2010).

Researchers have also financed terrorist organizations through cigarette smuggling (Hutchinson & O’Malley, 2007). An example occurred with RJ Reynolds, a profitable U.S. based cigarette manufacturing company (Shelley & Melzer, 2008). Individuals of the RJ Reynolds Company sent containers of cigarettes destined for Russia to Cypress, at which point RJ Reynolds paid the terrorist organization Kurdistan Workers Party a fee for every container of cigarettes that it redirected from Russia, across Turkey

and into Northern Iraq (Shelley & Melzer, 2008). In another case, terrorists living in North Carolina bought cigarettes in large quantities and moved them to Michigan (Shelley & Melzer, 2008). The terrorists subsequently took out a small business loan and opened a gas station in Michigan where they sold the cigarettes for seven dollars more per carton and used the profits to fund Hezbollah, a designated foreign terrorist organization (Shelley & Melzer, 2008).

### **Location of Crimes and Country of Origin**

Sandler (2010) distinguished domestic terrorism from international terrorism, emphasizing that the location of a crime of terrorism and the country of origin of the individual committing the crime of terrorism is meaningful. According to Sandler (2010), differences between international and domestic terrorism are predicated on a distinct list of criteria. International terrorism occurs when either the actors, the targets, or the spectators, is from a foreign country (Sandler, 2010). Therefore, governments at the national level are responsible for developing and changing laws and policies, as well managing their criminal justice systems. Hence, a government's willingness and ability to modify laws and manage its criminal justice system significantly contributes to social change. In consideration of social change, geography matters and justifies the selection of the variables location of crime and country of origin for the future analysis.

Literature generously provided evidence on the countries of origin for criminal offenders participating in crimes in support of terrorist organizations and the location of their crimes, both within and outside of U.S. borders. However, researchers frequently

found countries of origin to be in Latin-American countries. La Familia, Los Zetas, and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Columbia exemplify criminal groups whose countries of origin are in Latin America. Mexico was the country of origin, for instance, of individuals in the organization La Familia who were found to have participated in crimes linked to terrorist organizations, such as kidnapping, murder, and drug trafficking, to name a few (Ballina, 2011). Tremendously large numbers of members of La Familia currently operate in U.S. cities, such as Houston, Los Angeles, and Chicago (Grayson, 2010). No evidence has directly linked La Familia to a terrorist organization, nor has the group been designated by the U.S. State Department as a DTO; nevertheless, its ideological base, use of propaganda, and influence on policy and politics suggests that the organization is characteristic of a terrorist organization self-reliant on resources (Makarenko, 2004).

Like La Familia, the country of origin of Los Zetas is Mexico and the location of its crimes spread across Texas, Oklahoma, Arizona, and Tennessee (Campbell, 2010). Los Zetas has not been officially classified as a terrorist organization but is characteristic of one because its crimes are likened to those linked to terrorist organizations. In contrast to La Familia and Los Zetas, the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Columbia is on the U.S. Department of State list of DTOs (Cook, 2011). This terrorist organization is based in Columbia and its criminal support operations extend internationally (Cunningham, Everton, Wilson, Padilla, & Zimmerman, 2013). The group has successfully laundered money and trafficked drugs into Europe and the United States (Cook, 2011).

Within U.S. southern border states, large volumes of criminal offenders have been exploiting the lack of adequately funded communities by commandeering pockets of territory, committing heinous acts of violence, and threatening the lives of witnesses and police officers (Gardner & Killebrew, 2009). Moreover, criminal offenders are aggressively smuggling illegal substances into the U.S., in addition to trafficking approximately 1 to 2 million humans each year through the southern border (Rizer & Glaser, 2011).

### **Summary**

The RDT provided a useful foundation to understand the complex relationship among terrorist organizations, criminal offenders, and minors (Atkinson & Wein, 2010). In extant literature, researchers have thoroughly recognized the connection between criminal offenders, crime, and the material support to terrorist organizations (Balaceanu & Din, 2012). Nonetheless, violation of the statute of Material Support to Terrorist Organizations is hard to prove in a court of law (Ward, 2008). Criminal offenders in the United States may have supported terrorist organizations through the commission of various crimes, but have not been additionally sentenced for providing material support.

Literature also has been clear that adult criminal offenders have used minors in the commission of crimes (Shelley, 2009). What was not known is the likelihood that those crimes are used in support of terrorist organizations, given crime typology, country of origin of adult criminal offenders, and location in which the crimes have been



committed. The current quantitative analysis filled this gap and extended the knowledge in this field.

## Chapter 3: Research Method

### **Introduction**

This chapter begins with an explanation of the research design and approach for the current study, which includes an overview of the setting and sample, a description of USSC data collection procedures, as well as justification for the inclusion and exclusion of data in this analysis. The chapter also presents a discussion on the threats to the internal validity of the statistical conclusion validity, and the means by which to mitigate those threats. Last, the chapter concludes with ethical considerations of the study, such as formulation of the research question, data collection procedures, and dissemination of the research.

### **Research Design and Approach**

The purpose of conducting this study was to examine the predictors of the likelihood that adult criminal offenders will use minors for crimes associated with the support of terrorist organizations through a quantitative analysis. I selected a quantitative, rather than qualitative, method because the subjects in the study were criminal offenders sentenced for felony and Class A misdemeanor crimes, located in and likely incarcerated in various regions across the United States. A qualitative study would have required personal interviews with participants and because the scope of this study's subjects was vast, it would have been impractical to conduct face-to-face interviews with individual offenders across the United States. Because the data used for analysis in the study was numerical, a quantitative method was appropriate for the study.

This study followed a quasi-experimental, cross-sectional research design. Borque (2004) stated that researchers could use a cross-sectional research design for any unit of analysis, particularly when the subjects of a study are represented at a single point in time and are not homogeneous. The units of analysis for this study were individual cases in the fiscal year of 2012 and the individual cases reflected cases that were not homogeneous. Additionally, by employing a cross-sectional research design, I was able to measure the extent to which the selected variables of crime typology, location of crime, and country of origin relate to the use of minors to commit a crime.

I used SPSS version 22 to conduct the statistical tests on the data for the study. SPSS offers a wide range of tests; however, the nature of the variables of the study limited the choices of alternatives in the types of appropriate tests. Each of the three independent variables was categorical: crime typology, criminal offender's country of origin, and location of crime. The dependent variable, the use of a minor in the commission of the crime, was dichotomous. In consideration of the characteristics of the variables, the only appropriate statistical test that would measure the effect of the independent variables on the dependent variable was a binary logistic regression (Mertler & Vannatta, 2002). Therefore, I chose to conduct a binary logistic regression analysis for this study.

### **Setting and Sample**

This study involved use of secondary data obtained from the USSC's public website. The USSC routinely collects sentencing data from U.S. federal courts on all

individual offenders sentenced to felony crimes and Class A misdemeanors and provides a data clearinghouse on its official website (“United States Sentencing Commission,” n.d.). The data set used in the study is located on this website.

I decided to use this data set after review of the variable codebook (USSC, 2012). The codebook (USSC, 2012) showed that the data set included various types of crimes linked in related literature to providing material support to terrorist organizations. In addition, this contained a variable that indicated whether a criminal offender used a minor in the commission of the crime, which served as the outcome variable under examination. The codebook also included the predictor variables used for the examination, such as type of crime committed, an offender’s country of origin, and the location of the crime.

For the purpose of this study, the term *subjects* referred to the sample population of the USSC data set of criminal offenders represented by criminal case identification numbers from fiscal year 2012. The fiscal year 2012 data set was the most current available data at the time the research began. The fiscal year 2012 population data set consisted of 84,173 criminal cases and 18,724 variables (USSC, 2012). The criminal cases include every felony and Class A misdemeanor committed within the U.S. borders during 2012 by individuals 18 years or older. Hence, the target population is that population to which the sample population is generalizable. The sample population consisted of the individuals described in the 2012 data set and the target population consisted of all criminal offenders who used minors in the commission of crimes associated with the support of terrorist organizations.

### **USSC Procedures**

The USSC annually collects U.S. federal court data on individuals who have been sentenced for felony and misdemeanor crimes (“United States Sentencing Commission,” n.d.). This organization makes the data available to the public free of charge on its website. The available data set (USSC, 2012) for fiscal year 2012 is reflective of federal court documents sent to the USSC as of March 13, 2013. The USSC (2012) data set did not include cases in which individuals were not convicted of a crime, nor did it include cases in which individuals were sentenced to death (“United States Sentencing Commission,” n.d.). In addition, the data excluded cases when individuals were convicted but sentenced beyond the 2012 fiscal year (“United States Sentencing Commission,” n.d.).

### **Study Procedures**

I began this study by downloading the USSC’s fiscal year 2012 SPSS data file from the website and subsequently uploading the file into SPSS. I then resaved the file after deleting all but the following variables:

- the case identification number,
- use of minors,
- offender’s country of origin,
- location of the crime, and
- sentencing guidelines.

The sentencing guideline variable represented the crimes committed. Once selecting the required variables of interest from the data set, it was necessary to recode remaining string variables, such as sentencing guidelines, offender's country of origin, and location of the crime into numerical variables to facilitate their use in forthcoming quantitative analysis. Also, I re-labeled variable titles to reflect their true meaning and enhance comprehension for the reader. Finally, in order to find meaningful results, I reduced and combined many of the categories from the predictor variables (crime typology, crime location, and country of origin).

### **Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria**

The original data set that I obtained was too large for use in the analysis. Therefore, I limited the criteria for variable inclusion to those variables deemed useful to the study. The data set was cleaned for missing data in the selected variables; I discarded all cases with missing data. Researchers have linked multiple types of crimes to providing support to terrorist organizations (Choo, 2013; Farah, 2011; Sheinis, 2012). The analysis revealed the extent that the data quantitatively supports existing literature.

### **Measures**

#### **Crime Typology**

Because of the vast variety of existing felonies and Class A misdemeanor crimes, and because literature reflects that certain types of crimes are more strongly associated with terrorist organizations than others, similar crimes were grouped into a single category. For instance, prior researchers have consistently stated that drug and human smuggling

have had strong ties to providing support to terrorist organizations (Farah, 2012; Finklea, 2012; Hesterman, 2013). I placed drug trafficking, robbery, and human smuggling in separate categories to maintain consistency with this previous research. All other crimes were collectively grouped into a remaining category. The purpose of categorizing the crimes was to maintain alignment with the literature, simplify the analysis, and to highlight the effect that certain types of crimes contribute to the likelihood that criminal offenders will use minors in commission of those crimes. After categorizing the groups of crimes, I recoded the groups with a numerical designation for each and coded crime typology in the following manner:

- 1 = drug trafficking,
- 2 = weapons trafficking,
- 3 = human smuggling,
- 4 = robbery and theft, and
- 0 = other crime typology.

### **Location of Crime**

The data set variable that represents location of the crime is DISTRICT (USSC, 2012). The variable codebook (USSC, 2012) designated the state in which the crime occurred with a numerical code. For simplicity, the locations of the crimes were grouped based upon a map of the United States (see Appendix A), and categorized as one of four of the following regions: Northwest, Northeast, Southeast, or Southwest region. In the

logistic regression, the variable was dummy-coded. The largest region was treated as the reference category in the regression.

### **Country of Origin**

The country of origin variable described the country in which the offender was a citizen and was designated by CITWHERE (USSC, 2012). The country of origin variable already carries a numerical code designated by the USSC in the variable codebook (USSC, 2012). Examples of country of origin numerically listed in the codebook are Mexico, United States, and Uganda (USSC, 2012). By exception and for simplicity, countries with a small frequency were grouped together and labeled *other*. In order to keep the number of dummy-coded variables in the logistic regression to a minimum, I aggregated the data for all countries with frequencies of less than 20%. The U.S. country of origin was treated as the reference category for the logistic regression.

### **Use of Minors**

The USKIDH1 variable represents whether a minor was used in the commission of the crime (USSC, 2012). The codebook defined this variable as applicable to cases where an additional sentence was applied for the use of a minor in the commission of the crime. This variable is numerical and was coded as 0 = no use of minor and 1 = use of minor.

### **Data Analysis**

The study followed a quasi-experimental, cross-sectional research design, using logistic regression analysis. Logistic regression was the most appropriate test for this study because it allowed for the measurement of multiple independent variables on a



dichotomous dependent variable (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2001). Data for the study were extracted from the 2012 USSC data set, downloaded from a public website. The data on the website is available in SPSS format, therefore it was not necessary to adjust formatting prior to uploading it into SPSS.

I measured the effect that crime typology, location of crime, and offender's country of origin has on the use of minors in the commission of crimes in support of terrorist organizations. Based on the literature, I assumed that all cases of crimes included in the data set could be associated with the support of terrorist organizations. Data analysis involved measuring the effect of each of the independent variables, as well as measuring the effect of interaction among the variables, on the dependent variable. Descriptive statistics were also included in the study for each of the independent variables and the dependent variable.

I evaluated the Nagelkerke  $R^2$  to assess the percent of variance accounted for in the model. If the Wald statistic, or the coefficient of a predictor variable largely differs from zero, then a researcher can interpret that the predictor variable significantly influences whether a minor was used in a commission of a crime (Field, 2009). Last, I interpreted an odds ratio of greater than 1 to mean that as the predictor variable increases, so will the odds that a minor was used in the commission of a crime, and vice versa (Field, 2009).

The primary research question (RQ) for this study was: What is the likelihood that criminal offenders will use minors to commit crimes associated with supporting a

terrorist organization based on the type of crime committed, country of origin, and location of crime?

H<sub>0</sub>: There is no statistically significant relationship between crime typology, country of origin, and the location of a crime in the use of minors in cases of crimes associated with supporting a terrorist organization.

H<sub>1</sub>: Some crimes, countries of origin, and location of crime are more likely to use minors in crimes associated with the support of a terrorist organization.

### **Threats to External and Internal Validity**

Nachmias and Nachmias (2008) provided examples of threats to internal validity, such as *experimental mortality*, *instrumentation*, and *maturation*. Because the study was a cross-sectional design using archival data, threats to internal validity were considered, but were determined as non-applicable. To increase generalizability of the findings in the study, I used a large sample with maximum diversity related to the independent variables. Additionally, because the measurements were not representing any overarching constructs, construct validity did not apply.

### **Threats to Statistical Conclusion Validity**

Statistical conclusion validity refers to the statistical inferential applicability of research analysis for use in other studies (Levine, 2011). A Type I error consists of finding significance when significance does not exist within the higher population (false-positive response). A Type II error is not finding significance in the sample, although significance exists within the higher population. As Type I and Type II errors increase,

statistical conclusion validity decreases (Salkind, 2010). Moreover, an inverse relationship exists between Type I and Type II errors, and simultaneously maintaining these errors at a manageable level is crucial to achieving statistical conclusion validity (Salkind, 2010).

To mitigate the threat to statistical conclusion validity, I set the significance level at .05, a relatively low rate that decreased the probability of a Type I error. Simultaneously, setting the level of statistical power at .80, a relatively high rate, decreased the probability of a Type II error, and still allowed for an adequate sample size. Employing each of these strategies helped manage the probability of Type I and Type II errors while maintaining statistical conclusion validity for the study (Howell, 2010).

### **Reliability of the Instrument**

The current analysis consisted of a secondary data set; therefore, a data collection instrument was not used for the study. Federal courts in the United States send report data on cases of felony crimes and Class A misdemeanors to the USSC, which in turn collects, consolidates, and publishes the data on its public website. There is no means by which to validate the veracity of the data.

### **Data Assumptions**

As in all statistical tests, logistic regression has a unique set of data assumptions that must be met prior to the test execution. The three assumptions associated with logistic regression are linearity, independence of errors, and multicollinearity (Field,

2009). Prior to conducting the analysis, I used SPSS to confirm the data met applicable statistical assumptions.

### **Linearity**

Within regression analysis, the assumption of linearity is usually assessed prior to the analysis. However, linearity can only be confirmed when the dependent variable is continuous, and because the dependent variable for the study was dichotomous, it was impossible to test the relationship for linearity in its current form (Field, 2009). Instead, linear relationships must occur between the independent variables and the log-odds of the dependent variable occurring. However, because all independent variables in this study were categorical, the assumption of linearity did not apply (as variables in the model were only be coded as 0 or 1). Thus the assumption was not checked (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2001).

### **Independence of Errors**

The independence of errors assumption mandates that no two cases should be the same, meaning that the difference between the prediction and the observation for any two variables cannot be associated with one another (Field, 2009). Because the design only measures data at one time point and each subject is independent of other subjects, I assumed that the errors were independent, in alignment with Tabachnick and Fidell (2012).

### **Multicollinearity**

Multicollinearity means that the independent variables have a high level of correlation with each other (Field, 2009). Because the variables are all categorical, I conducted a multiway frequency analysis, as outlined by Tabachnick and Fidell (2012). I determined the significance within the model in order to assess for potential multicollinearity.

### **Sample Size**

In the initial analyses, I analyzed the data set for missing values and to ensure accuracy of data entry. Out of the total sample of 84,173, approximately 10% or 8,309 of those crimes involving use of minors were unaccounted for. Therefore, 75,864 cases were considered for use in the initial analyses. However, the initial analysis uncovered a large disparity in number of cases in which minors were not used in the commission of a crime (75,609, 100%), compared to those in which minors were used (255, 0%). Therefore, I used a random generated identifier in Excel to randomly select 255 from 75,609 observations where minors were not used. These cases were then merged into the data set for subsequent analysis containing the cases in which minors were used in the commission of the crime. The final data set consisted of 510 cases, of which 255 observations used minors, and 255 observations did not use minors. These 510 cases were used in the final analysis.

### **Protection of Subjects**

The cases in the 2012 USSC data set used in the study provided some identifiable, demographic variables, such as marital status, gender, and age. Each case also had a case identification number. However, none of the data exposed the personal identification of any one person sentenced in a crime, nor did the data set pose a risk to the personal safety and security of any of the subjects reflected in the data set.

### **Ethical Considerations**

Ethical considerations are explained as related to the research question, the purpose, the data analysis and interpretation, and in writing and disseminating the research. In addition, I downloaded and saved the data prior to the start of the research, as I determined it necessary to ensure missing data would not render the data set unusable. Once I confirmed that missing data were not extensive, the data were downloaded and saved. No analysis was conducted on the data without IRB approval. The IRB approval number is 08-03-15-0314272.

### **Ethical Issues in the Research Question**

The research question addressed the use of minors in adult crimes associated with terrorist organizations. Because minors are considered a protected population, one might consider that the research question contains an ethical issue. On the contrary, the USSC data set only included cases of adult crimes. In those cases where the criminal offender used a minor in the commission of a crime, no existing identifiable information was

provided on the minor. The cases only revealed if a minor was used or not. Therefore, the research question presents no ethical violation.

### **Ethical Issues in the Purpose and Question**

This study serves as a useful tool to inform parents, teachers, law enforcement, and security analysts that minors may be at risk of criminal exploitation through their illicit partnerships with criminal offenders. Furthermore, the results may shed light on risks that may be occurring in particular regions of the country, with support to terrorist organizations. Hence, increasing the understanding of the complexities of these relationships can only serve to inform communities. Therefore, no ethical issues surfaced through this study.

### **Ethical Issues in Data Analysis and Interpretation**

The downloaded data set is currently located and password-protected on my personal computer hard drive. The data were not used for any purpose prior to analysis. The data analysis and subsequent interpretation was limited to answering the research question and testing the hypothesis, approved by the IRB before the analysis began.

### **Ethical Issues in Writing and Disseminating the Research**

As stated, this study included archival data downloaded from a public website. No confidential or personally identifiable information was used. Of the variables available in the data set, the research was limited to the use of five. No threat to the privacy or safety to the criminal offenders in the data set existed in the writing and dissemination of the research.

### **Summary**

I employed a quasi-experimental, cross-sectional research design using a logistic regression test to measure the likelihood that criminal offenders will use minors to commit crimes associated with terrorism, based on the type of crime committed, the offender's country of origin, and the location of the crime. To ensure maximum possible protection of the subjects, the study involved use of a non-personally identifiable secondary data set, published by the USSC. I minimized bias through use of the total sample population. In light of these considerations, I developed a data analysis plan that guaranteed successful implementation of the intended analysis, detailed in the following chapter.



## Chapter 4: Results

### **Introduction**

The purpose of this study was to examine the predictors of the likelihood that adult criminal offenders will use minors in the commission of crimes associated with the support of terrorist organizations. This chapter reports the results of data collection and data screening methods. The chapter also includes the frequencies and percentages of the demographic traits of the sample, followed by the analyses conducted to examine the research questions, and a summary of the findings.

### **Data Screening**

This study involved use of secondary data obtained via the USSC's public website. This data set consisted of 84,173 criminal cases of every felony and Class A misdemeanor in 2012. Prior to the initial analyses, I analyzed the data set for missing values to ensure accuracy of data entry. Out of the total sample of 84,173, I was not able to determine whether or not they used a minor in a total of 8,309, or 10%, of those crimes. Therefore, 75,864 cases were considered for use in the initial analyses.

However, the initial analysis uncovered a large disparity in number of cases where minors were not used in the commission of a crime (75,609, 99.7%), compared to those where minors were used (255, .03%). Simple random sampling helped to create a data set comprised of 255 cases of crimes where minors were used and 255 cases where minors were not used (Rossi, Wright, & Anderson, 2013). To create the simple random sample, I used a random generated identifier in Microsoft Excel to randomly select 255

from 75,609 observations where minors were not used. I then merged these cases into the data set for subsequent analysis containing the cases where minors were used in the commission of the crime. The final data set consisted of 510 cases, of which 255 observations used minors and 255 observations that did not use minors. These 510 cases were used in the final analysis.

Additionally, I checked the data set for both univariate and multivariate outliers. Stevens (2009) defined univariate outliers as values greater than  $-3.29$  and  $+3.29$  standard deviations from the mean. Using this definition, no data points were identified as outliers. Furthermore, I conducted descriptive statistics with a focus on frequencies and percentages for the categorical variables of interest. The use of  $k-1$  dummy coding categorical variables helped to achieve pairwise comparisons between the variables of interest and reference variables (Field, 2009). Categorical variables with the highest frequencies were identified as the reference categories in the logistic regression analysis.

### **Descriptive Statistics**

The variables of interest from the data set used were:

- the use of a minor in the crime,
- crime typology,
- location of the crime, and
- the country of origin where the offender was born.

Location of the crime committed was first given by state and later grouped into 3 regions: West (82, 16%), Northeast (141, 28%), and South (262, 51%). Location information was omitted for the remaining cases.

I took into consideration the birthplace of those criminals, listed as the variable *country of origin*. For simplicity, country of origin data were separated into three groups based on total frequency. Countries 20% and higher total frequency were grouped together and less than 20% grouped together. Hence, the three groups were the United States (388, 76%), Mexico (79, 16%), and Other (composed of all remaining countries of origin; 43, 8%). Table 1 reports the frequencies and percentages of the nominal variables.

Table 1

*Frequencies and Percentages for Use of Minors, Crime Typology, and Location of Crime*

Variables	<i>n</i>	%
Use of Minors		
No use of minor	255	50
Use of minor	255	50
Crime Typology		
Drug Trafficking	222	44
Weapons Trafficking	43	8
Robbery/Theft	84	17
Other	161	31
Location of Crime		
South	26	51
West	82	16
Northeast	141	28
Country of Origin		
United States	388	76
Mexico	79	16
Other	43	8

*Note.* Due to rounding errors, percentages may not add up to 100.

The use of minors in the commission of a crime was separated dichotomously into no use of minor (255, 50%) and use of minor (255, 50%). Crime typology was grouped into four categories, (a) drug trafficking (222, 44%), (b) weapons trafficking (43, 8%), (c) robbery and theft (84, 17%), and (d) other crimes (161, 31%). Of the 255 cases where minors were used in the commission of the crime, 127 (50%) were drug trafficking crimes, 15 (6%) were weapons trafficking crimes, 30 (12%) were human smuggling crimes, 49 (19%) were robbery and theft crimes, and 34 (13%) were other types of crime. Table 2 reports the frequencies and percentages reporting crime typology and the use of minors in the commission of the crime.

Table 2

*Frequencies and Percentages of Crime Types and Use of Minors in the Commission of the Crime*

Crime Type	<i>n</i>	%
Drug Trafficking	127	50
Weapons Trafficking	15	6
Robbery & Theft	49	19
Other	64	25

*Note.* Due to rounding errors, percentages may not add up to 100.

### Research Question

What is the likelihood that criminal offenders will use minors to commit crimes associated with supporting a terrorist organization based on the type of crime committed, country of origin, and location of crime?

- H0: There is no statistically significant relationship between crime typology, country of origin, and the location of a crime in the use of minors in cases of crimes associated with supporting a terrorist organization.
- H1: Some crimes, countries of origin, and location of crime are more likely to use minors in crimes associated with the support of a terrorist organization.

### **Binary Logistic Regression**

#### **Assumption**

I considered the assumptions of the logistic regression prior to conducting the test; however, it was not required to test for the assumption of linearity because of the categorical nature of the independent variables (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2001).

Furthermore, the assumption of independence of the errors was assumed to be true, given that each independent variable is independent of each other and the study only involved measures at one point in time (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2012).

The purpose of testing for the assumption of absence of multicollinearity is to ensure the predictor variables are not too closely related. I assessed absence of multicollinearity using Variance Inflation Factors (VIFs). Variance inflation factor values higher than 10 suggest the presence of multicollinearity and a violation of the assumption (Stevens, 2009). However, none of the variables in the model met the criteria of high VIFs; therefore, the assumption was met. Table 3 presents the results of the multicollinearity assessment.

Table 3

*Multicollinearity Diagnostic Coefficients for Model with Type of Crime, Country of Origin, and Location of Crime Predicting Use of Minors in Crimes*

Model	Collinearity Statistics	
	Tolerance	VIF
Location (Northeast)	.844	1.184
Location (South)	.886	1.128
Crime (Drug Trafficking)	.862	1.160
Crime (Weapons Trafficking)	.879	1.138
Crime (Robbery)	.939	1.065
Country (Mexico)	.947	1.056
Country (Other)	.895	1.117

## Results

I conducted a logistic regression to assess if crime typology, country of origin, and location of crime predicted use of minors. Use of minors was coded as 0 = no use of minor and 1 = use of minor in the crime. As described earlier, since crime typology was a nominal variable, it was dummy-coded to have other crimes as the reference category. Similarly, the nominal variables country of origin and location of crime were dummy-coded to have the United States and West as the reference categories, respectively.

The results of the logistic regression showed a significant model,  $\chi^2(7, N=485) = 180.18$ ,  $p < .001$ , Nagelkerke  $R^2 = .41$ . This suggested that type of crime, country of

origin, and location of crime accounted for 41% of the variance in the model. I more closely examined individual predictors.

The odds ratio in the logistics regression calculated how likely it was that each of the dependent variables would affect the independent variable. The odds ratio represents the odds of an event occurring compared to it not occurring and is calculated by  $\text{Exp}(\beta)$ , where  $\beta$  is the individual coefficient of each predictor (Field, 2009). For example, the odds ratio for weapons trafficking crimes was 1.39, which indicated that the odds of a minor being used for a crime of human smuggling is 1.39 times that of the odds of a minor not being used.

Predicted probabilities of using a minor in the commission of a crime were determined for all variables by  $\text{Exp}(\beta)$ . For negative coefficients in the regression, the inverse  $\text{Exp}(\beta)$  was taken to assess the predicted probabilities of not using a minor in the commission of crimes (Leech, Barrett, & Morgan, 2008). However, no negative coefficients existed in the regression.

Drug trafficking crimes were a significant predictor of the use of minors in crimes,  $\beta = 0.75$ ,  $p = .002$ ,  $OR = 2.12$ , suggesting that if the participant was involved in a drug trafficking crime, they were 2.1 times more likely to use minors in the commission of that crime when compared to those who committed other crimes. Robbery crimes were a significant predictor of the use of minors in crimes,  $\beta = 1.51$ ,  $p = .017$ ,  $OR = 4.53$ , suggesting that if the participant was involved in a robbery crime, he or she was 4.5 times more likely to use minors in the commission of that crime when compared to those who

committed other crimes. The results indicated that for country of origin, U.S. born offenders were a significant predictor of use of minors for crimes,  $\beta = 1.12$ ,  $p = .040$ ,  $OR = 3.08$ , suggesting that if the participant was born in the United States, he or she was 3.1 times more likely to use minors for crimes when compared to those offenders born in other countries. The results also indicated that being Mexican-born was a significant predictor of use of minors for crimes,  $\beta = 1.58$ ,  $p = .010$ ,  $OR = 4.85$ . This suggests that if the participant was born in Mexico, he or she was 4.9 times more likely to use minors for crimes when compared to those offenders born in other countries.

The results displayed that for the variable location of crime, crimes committed in the Northeast region were a significant predictor of use of minors in crimes,  $\beta = -3.68$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $OR = 0.03$ ; however, the low odds ratio suggested that a negligible increase existed in the odds that a minor would be used in the commission of a crime if the crime is committed in the Northeast. Southern region was also a significant predictor of use of minors in crimes,  $\beta = -0.70$ ,  $p = .019$ ,  $OR = 0.50$ , suggesting that if the participant committed a crime in the Southern region, he or she was 0.5 times more likely to use minors in the commission of a crime when compared to other regions. Table 4 presents results of the logistic regression.



Table 4

*Logistic Regression Predicting Use of Minors in Crimes from Type of Crime, Adult Offender's Country of Origin, and Location of Crime*

Source	$\beta$	SE	Wald	p	Exp(B)
Region (Northeast)	-3.68	.438	70.72	.000	0.03
Region (South)	-0.70	.299	5.52	.019	0.50
Crime (Drug Trafficking)	0.75	.245	9.39	.002	2.12
Crime (Weapons Trafficking)	-0.17	.400	0.19	.667	0.84
Crime (Robbery)	1.51	.630	5.74	.017	4.53
Country (United States)	1.12	.546	4.23	.040	3.08
Country (Mexico)	1.58	.609	6.71	.010	4.85

Note.  $\chi^2(7) = 180.18$ ,  $p < .001$ , Nagelkerke  $R^2 = .41$ ,  $n = 485$ .

### Summary

Chapter 4 contained the frequencies and percentages of the demographic properties of the sample. I then answered the research question by conducting a logistic regression to examine any significant relationships between crime typology, country of origin, and location of crime with the use of minors in cases of crime associated with supporting a terrorist organization. Results of the model were significant,  $\chi^2(7, N=485) = 180.18$ ,  $p < .001$ , Nagelkerke  $R^2 = .41$ , and suggested that individual variables were significant predictors of the use of minors in cases of crime associated with supporting a terrorist organization.

## Chapter 5: Summary, Conclusions, and Recommendations

### **Introduction**

Resource dependency theory states that organizations rely on one other for resources in order to survive (Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978). Foreign terrorist organizations must have money to survive (Myres, 2012). Money to fund terrorist organizations can come from an almost endless variety of sources (Paul, 2010); however, one of the primary sources that funds terrorist organizations is crime (Freeman, 2011). Crime yields high revenues for terrorist organizations that can be invested in carrying out terrorist attacks. Foreign terrorist organizations have primarily depended on adult criminal offenders to commit crimes for them that enhance their organizations' productivity and ultimately their terrorist goals (Bălăceanu & Din, 2012). In exchange, they have offered money to profit-motivated criminal offenders in the United States (Rollins & Wylter, 2013).

In the execution of crimes in support of foreign terrorist organizations, adult criminal offenders may be using minors to help commit such crimes. Clear evidence suggests that adult offenders have motivation to use minors in the commission of crimes. For example, using minors to commit crimes is advantageous because minors are less conspicuous than adults during criminal pursuit (Shelley, 2009). Minors also possessing aggregate risk factors, such as drug use, poor family structure, and negative peer pressure that make them susceptible targets for predatory use for criminal activity (Esbensen et al., 2009). In addition, adult criminal offenders are motivated to use minors because they

believe sentencing for minor crime is generally lighter when compared to adults (Shelley, 2009). Prior to the study, it was unknown what the likelihood is that adult offenders will use minors in commission of crimes associated with the material support to terrorist organizations. The purpose of conducting this study was to examine the predictors of the likelihood that adult criminal offenders will use minors for crimes in support of terrorist organizations.

The primary research question guiding this study was, What is the likelihood that criminal offenders will use minors to commit crimes associated with supporting a terrorist organization based on the type of crime committed, country of origin, and location of crime? Two related hypotheses were tested:

- H0: There is no statistically significant relationship between crime typology, country of origin, and the location of a crime in the use of minors in cases of crimes associated with supporting a terrorist organization.
- H1: Some crimes, countries of origin, and locations of crime are more likely to use minors in crimes associated with the support of a terrorist organization.

Drug trafficking crimes were a significant predictor of the use of minors in crimes,  $\beta = 0.75$ ,  $p = .002$ ,  $OR = 2.12$ , suggesting that if the participant was involved in a drug trafficking crime, he or she was 2.1 times more likely to use minors in the commission of that crime when compared to those who committed other crimes. Robbery crimes were a significant predictor of the use of minors in crimes,  $\beta = 1.51$ ,  $p = .017$ ,  $OR = 4.53$ . This suggested that if the participant was involved in a robbery crime, he or she was 4.5 times

more likely to use minors in the commission of that crime when compared to those who committed other crimes. The results indicated that for country of origin, U.S. born offenders were a significant predictor of use of minors for crimes,  $\beta = 1.12$ ,  $p = .040$ ,  $OR = 3.08$ , suggesting that if the participant was born in the United States, he or she was 3.1 times more likely to use minors for crimes when compared to those offenders born in other countries.

The study results also indicated that for country of origin, Mexican born offenders were a significant predictor of use of minors for crimes,  $\beta = 1.58$ ,  $p = .010$ ,  $OR = 4.85$ , suggesting that if the participant was born in Mexico, he or she was 4.9 times more likely to use minors for crimes when compared to those offenders born in other countries. The results displayed that for the variable location of crime, crimes committed in the Northeast region of the United States were a significant predictor of use of minors in crimes,  $\beta = -3.68$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $OR = 0.03$ . However, the low odds ratio suggests that a negligible increase existed in the odds that a minor would be used in the commission of a crime if the crime is committed in the Northeast region. The Southern region of the United States was a significant predictor of use of minors in crimes,  $\beta = -0.70$ ,  $p = .019$ ,  $OR = 0.50$ , suggesting that if the participant committed a crime in the Southern region, he or she was 0.5 times more likely to use minors in the commission of a crime when compared to other regions.

The study followed a quasi-experimental, cross-sectional research design. I extracted secondary data from a 2012 data set on the USSC public website, which

included 84,173 criminal cases and 18,724 variables. In order to efficiently conduct tests on the data, I selected variables of interest, recoded string variables, and combined categories of variables. SPSS was used to run a logistic regression test on the data. The results of the logistic regression showed a significant model,  $\chi^2(7, N=485) = 180.18$ ,  $p < .001$ , Nagelkerke  $R^2 = .41$ . The null hypothesis was rejected, which suggests that type of crime, country of origin, and location of crime accounted for 6% of the variance in the model.

The examination results indicated that offenders who committed weapons trafficking or other crimes were less likely to use minors in the commission of crimes associated with supporting a terrorist organization than those who committed drug trafficking crimes. On the other hand, offenders who committed crimes of human smuggling were more likely to use minors than those who committed drug trafficking crimes. The results also suggested that offenders born outside of the United States are less likely to use minors in cases of crime associated with supporting a terrorist organization than those born inside of the United States. Finally, criminals in all other regions in the United States were less likely to use minors in the commission of crimes associated with supporting a terrorist organization than those active in the Southern region of the United States. This geographically based finding is a significant piece of information for policy makers and appropriators making decisions regarding where to concentrate resources.

## **Interpretation of the Findings**

### **Use of Minors and Crime Typology**

Prior research showed that drug trafficking has been used to fund terrorist organizations (Balina, 2011; Farah, 2011; Hutchinson & O'Malley, 2007; Sheinis, 2012). Earlier researchers also supported the premise that adult offenders have consistently used minors in drug trafficking crimes (Mastropolo, 2013; Walters & Davis, 2011). Therefore, I determined the finding that adult offenders were most likely to use minors for drug trafficking crimes to support terrorist organizations was consistent with existing literature.

In addition to drug trafficking, existing research provided some evidence that robbery, specifically auto theft, is linked to the funding of terrorist organizations (Campbell, 2010). Adult offenders in the United States (mostly heads of gangs) have used minors to commit robbery and theft (Mastropolo, 2013). In this light, the findings are consistent with the literature and support the idea that adult offenders may use minors for robbery in support of terrorist organizations.

### **Use of Minors and Country of Origin**

The variable country of origin was a significant predictor of the likelihood that adult criminal offenders will use minors in the commission of crimes associated with material support to a terrorist organization. Furthermore, I determined that findings from the current study were consistent with previous research, which indicated leaders of Mexican drug cartels have used minors to commit crimes (Gardner & Killebrew, 2009; Mastropolo, 2013). Hundreds of thousands of humans, including minors, are trafficked

through Mexico into the United States every year for use in prostitution and illegally transporting drugs and other commodities (Walters & Davis, 2011). Additionally, adult leaders of Mexican drug cartels, such as MS13 that operate in cities all across the United States, are recruiting minors from schools and communities for use in crime at young ages (Killebrew & Bernal, 2010).

Understanding that adult offenders born in Mexico are more likely to use minors in crimes that support terrorist organizations is meaningful from an RDT perspective. One tenet of RDT is interdependence, meaning that a willful exchange of resources occurs, which allows a steady state of independence from both actors (Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978; Price, Schau, & Thomas, 2013). Mexican-born adult criminal offenders and minors may exchange resources, such as services and money, around a single criminal activity, creating an interdependent relationship.

### **Use of Minors and Location of Crime**

The findings were consistent with the literature for this predictor variable. The literature stated that adult offenders have committed crimes associated with terrorist organizations in states located in the southern United States, and researchers were unequivocally clear that minors were used. The analysis clearly indicated that when compared to the Southern region, other regions were less likely to use minors in the commission of crimes associated with supporting terrorist organizations. Adult offenders in the Southern region of the United States are more likely to exploit minors for crime when compared to all other regions.

### **Limitations of the Study**

The primary limitation of the current study affecting generalizability and validity was that the data used for the current research could not be analyzed to demonstrate that crime typology was explicitly linked to material support of a terrorist organization. Therefore, even in cases where adults used minors for crime, it is possible that those crimes were not in support of terrorist organizations. The idea that crime supports foreign terrorist organizations is solely based on qualitative analysis contained in extant literature. A variable was available in the 2012 USSC data set that included cases of adult criminal offenders who had committed crimes in which additional sentencing for providing material support to terrorist organizations was applied. However, I decided not to use the variable in the analysis. The limited number of cases in which this additional sentencing was applied would not have been conducive for use in a quantitative analysis. Therefore, I decided to rely on literature as a basis for the argument that because of prosecutorial challenges, criminal offenders may commit many different types of crimes in support foreign terrorist organizations, but are only sentenced under the statute of the crime and not for the statute of providing material support (Sutherland, 2013; Ward, 2008). A significant limitation was that cases involving minors represented a small percentage of the cases available in the data set.

### **Recommendations for Future Study**

This study provides a framework for multiple future research directions. First, its findings suggest that it is useful to study and compare subsequent data sets in a



longitudinal study. Replicating the study by testing subsequent data sets over time would allow researchers to identify trends that might be occurring across the United States. For instance, it would be useful to know if, over time, adult criminal offenders have increased or decreased their use of minors in certain regions for crimes associated with terrorist organizations. In addition, future researchers should identify any shifts in demographics of the adult criminal offenders using minors in the commission of crimes, over time. Understanding such trends could assist policy makers to adjust policies to deter adult criminal offenders from using children in such a manner.

Furthermore, future studies narrowing the focus of the research in one of two ways would be useful. One way to narrow the focus is to examine only those cases where minors were used for crime. The 2012 data set included 255 such cases. The results of the analysis for the current study showed that adults were most likely to use minors in cases of crimes of human smuggling. Future researchers should take this analysis a step further to understand, for example among the 255 cases where adult criminals had used minors in the commission of crimes, what the likelihood is that those adult criminals would engage in human smuggling activity in support of terrorist organizations.

Another suggestion for narrowing the focus of the study is to more closely identify and examine the specific regions within the southern United States where criminal offenders are using minors to commit crimes associated with terrorist organizations. In order to best prevent and combat this problem, state and local law

enforcement need to understand more specifically where it is happening. Further research may reveal that even though a particular region has been designated to produce specific types of criminal activity, it may be that criminal “hot spots” contribute to an overall high number of crimes for that region (Weisburd, Groff, & Yang, 2014).

This type of information could be useful to state law enforcement and joint terrorism task forces who need to have some level of predictability in their municipalities.

### **Implications for Social Change**

This study has several positive implications for positive social change. First, I designed the study to increase awareness among scholars and practitioners of collaboration between terrorist organizations, adult criminal offenders, and minors. It specifically identified that adult criminal offenders, primarily in the Southern and Northeast regions of the United States, have used minors for crimes associated with terrorist organizations.

This study may also serve as a mechanism to solicit federal and state governments to increase and endorse sponsorship of data collection to extend this research to the state and local levels. Data regarding terrorist activities and organizations are generally protected and cannot be shared by government agencies. In particular, few data sets that include demographic data about terrorists and criminal offenders’ affiliation with terrorist organizations are available for researchers to use for quantitative analysis. For this reason, few quantitative studies on terrorism exist (Holt, 2012; O’Brien, 2012; Perri & Brody, 2011).

Last, the results of the study suggest a need for additional funding for states in the Northeast and Southern regions of the United States to develop and maintain educational and social programs for vulnerable minors who may fall prey to adult criminal offenders. Furthermore, additional federal funding will assist in thoroughly pursuing and prosecuting criminals who may be in collaboration with terrorist organizations.

### **Conclusion**

Much of the literature in the field of terrorism studies is qualitative and has an international focus. Previous literature is clear that a link between terrorist organizations and criminal offenders exists in the United States, and that adult criminal offenders are using minors for crime. However, this research left a gap in understanding the possibility that adult criminal offenders are using minors for crime in support of terrorist organizations. This dissertation study advanced the literature by providing a quantitative study that, using RDT as a construct, focused on the likelihood that adult criminal offenders will exploit minors for use in crimes associated with support to terrorist organizations. Law enforcement agencies can use the results of this study to tailor their practices to better crime prevention and protection of vulnerable minors. Future researchers and practitioners can replicate this study to enhance understanding.

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Appendix: Region Grouping of the United States

